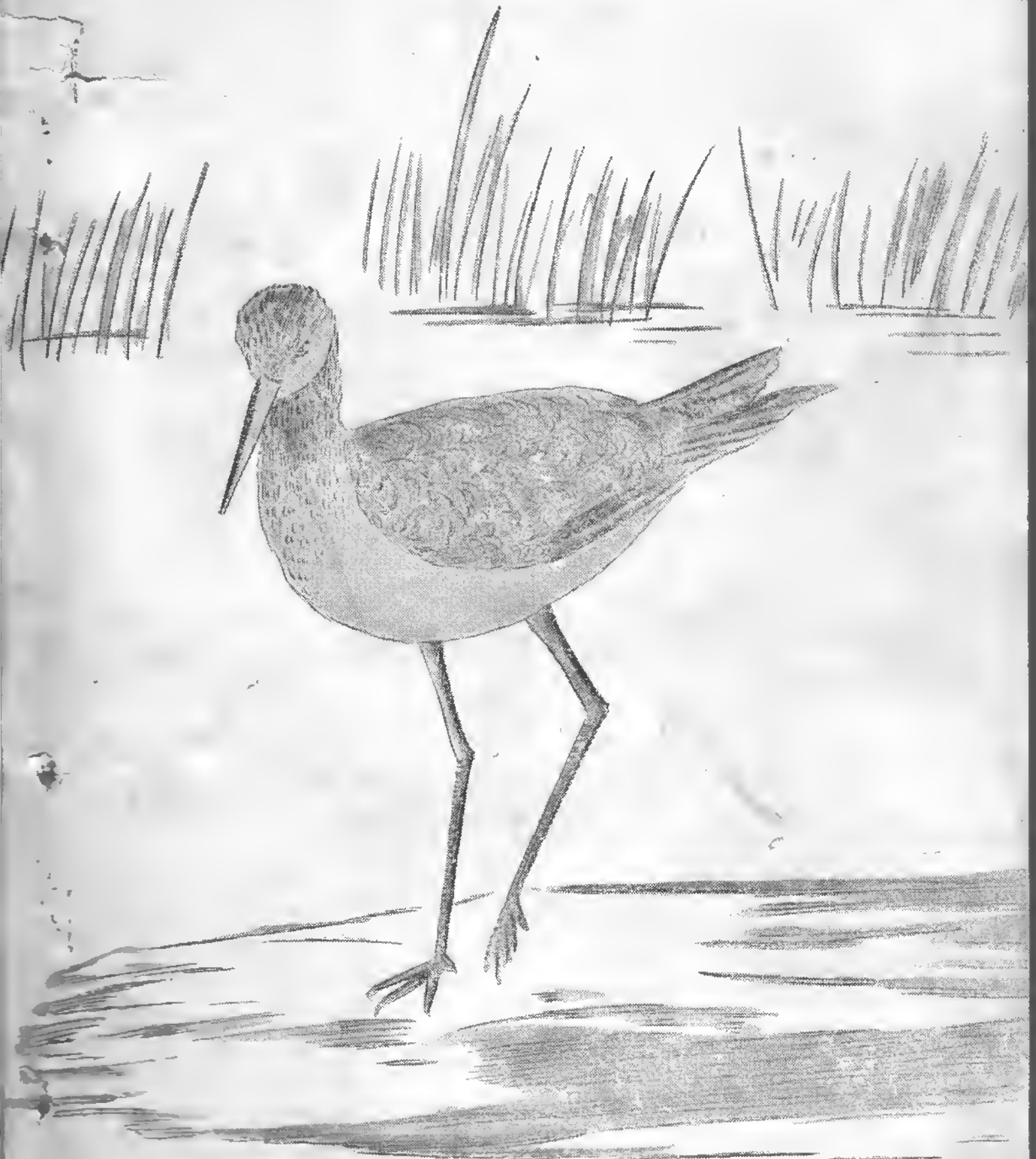


# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 January



NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 1

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RETURN TO DELHI

During late October and November 1963, I had the opportunity to renew acquaintance with old friends, human and avian, in and near Delhi. Although ornithological opportunities were restricted, those we had were very well rewarded, and some of the results may be worth noting here.

On 25 October we had time for a brief outing with General Williams. Mrs. Ganguli had advised us that we might do well to visit the Jamuna above Delhi, near the new bridge. So thither we went. Before we ever reached the river, we found a vast concourse of Terns beating up and down over the dirty brook that flows past the ancient mosque just before Timapur. It was impossible to estimate exact numbers, especially as the population was constantly changing. But as we stood beside the stream, with the birds flying to and fro within a few yards, I concluded that three hundred would not have been an over-estimate. The great majority were River Terns, but one Gullbilled Tern came close past, already in winter plumage with almost white head, and at least two much smaller Whiskered Terns, one of them still showing slight flakings of its dark breast plumage. After a time a single Brownheaded Gull appeared in the throng. Perhaps it had that moment arrived from further north,

As there were also numerous waders to hold our attention, we did not move over to the river, only a couple of hundred yards away, for half an hour or more. When we did get there, we reached the climax of our morning with the Laridae. Where the water comes pouring out from the weir that feeds Delhi's new water-works, a number of Pariah Kites and several immature Brahminy Kites were sailing about close to the water, evidently expecting to find food in the swirling waters. Suddenly they were joined by an enormous gull in immature plumage. Soon two other birds, same size and plumage, joined them; all three spent some time circling round among the kites. Then two settled at the edge of the water, but rather further off, with their backs to us, so that the colour of the bill was not visible. However, I could not doubt from their size that they were Great Blackheaded Gulls. As they flew with the kites, they looked rather larger than the Brahminies, but smaller than the Pariahs. The contrast between the black tail band and white base of the tail was also conspicuous. But this feature, though given as diagnostic for the young Great Blackheaded in some books, is perhaps not in itself a very good identification mark. Young Herring Gulls, in certain plumages, can show a very pale tail base, contrasting with the blackish tip, and we all know how dangerous it is to estimate size, unless you have some reliable comparison at hand. On this occasion, we not only had the two kites, but before long two Brownheaded Gulls appeared, which looked very diminutive beside the larger birds -- a stronger contrast, I think, than they show when in the company of Herring or Lesser Blackbacked Gulls.

Mrs. Ganguli has also suggested another point, from her own observation of immature Great Blackheaded, which I believe is reliable. The wing pattern of the immature Great Blackheaded appears to be distinct from that of the other large gulls. The outer primaries are much darker than the other primary feathers; and there is also a second very dark brown area in the secondaries. This is perhaps a point that needs closer attention. I do not find any reference to it in the books, but General Williams noticed it while we had these three birds under observation. So I was specially interested to find Mrs. Ganguli already aware of it. It should also be noted that even the bill colour needs to be used with some caution. It is doubtless true that a large immature gull with a clear yellow bill, apart from a dark tip, is a Great Blackheaded, but it may be noted that Witherby, in the *HANDBOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS*, thus describes the bill of 3rd winter Herring Gull (which would still be in brown immature plumage): 'base bone-coloured tinged yellow, towards tip of upper pale yellow, angle marked with orange and black'. So I think the ornithologist who wants to identify an immature Great Blackheaded Gull should try to arrange to see it in close proximity to some species with which useful comparison can be made, such as kites, or even better, alongside some Herring Gulls.

Strange to say, on 7 November, that is to say two weeks later, Mrs. Ganguli and I saw three large immature gulls, with two Brownheaded, at Okhla, I suppose 15 miles down river from the Timapur area. These we thought were Great Blackheaded. But they were a good deal further off than the Timapur birds, once again too far for the bill colour to be determined. Possibly they were the very same birds, still lingering on the Jamuna river.

On this same day, we had the astonishing good luck to find a Reef Heron near the river at another place. I believe Mrs.

As there were also numerous waders to hold our attention, we did not move over to the river, only a couple of hundred yards away, for half an hour or more. When we did get there, we reached the climax of our morning with the Laridae. Where the water comes pouring out from the weir that feeds Delhi's new water-works, a number of Pariah Kites and several immature Brahminy Kites were sailing about close to the water, evidently expecting to find food in the swirling waters. Suddenly they were joined by an enormous gull in immature plumage. Soon two other birds, same size and plumage, joined them; all three spent some time circling round among the kites. Then two settled at the edge of the water, but rather further off, with their backs to us, so that the colour of the bill was not visible. However, I could not doubt from their size that they were Great Blackheaded Gulls. As they flew with the kites, they looked rather larger than the Brahminies, but smaller than the Pariahs. The contrast between the black tail band and white base of the tail was also conspicuous. But this feature, though given as diagnostic for the young Great Blackheaded in some books, is perhaps not in itself a very good identification mark. Young Herring Gulls, in certain plumages, can show a very pale tail base, contrasting with the blackish tip, and we all know how dangerous it is to estimate size, unless you have some reliable comparison at hand. On this occasion, we not only had the two kites, but before long two Brownheaded Gulls appeared, which looked very diminutive beside the larger birds -- a stronger contrast, I think, than they show when in the company of Herring or Lesser Blackbacked Gulls.

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On this same day, we had the astonishing good luck to find a Reef Heron near the river at another place. I believe Mrs. Ganguli has already sent in a full note on this, so I will not repeat.

Before we left Delhi, we spent an hour early one morning on the river with Peter Jackson. Our main desire was to see the flocks of Stilts and Avocets at close quarters, and they behaved perfectly. But apart from these and many other waders, which allowed us to watch them at close quarters from the canoe, the star of that morning was a fine Caspian Tern, which allowed us to approach to perhaps 20 yards before it left its mud-bank. This appears to be the first definite record of the species from near Delhi, though I believe Mrs. Ganguli did in fact see one a few months earlier; but with her habitual caution, she did not record it, as it was a bird she did not know from any previous experience.

So, within a few weeks, I had the luck to assist in adding two species to the Delhi bird list, which is now very nearly five hundred. The Great Blackheaded Gull has been recorded two or three times before, though I personally had never had the good luck to find it near Delhi till now.

Horace Alexander  
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#### A VISIT TO THE LAND OF THE FORKTAILS, REDSTARTS, AND DIPPERS

If we do not interfere with birds we always find them in their natural habitat, within an environment with which the pattern of their colourful feathers, their habits, and their behaviour blend and form a natural camouflage, for instance pipits and larks are to be found in stony and sandy patches of ground that suit the pattern of their feathers so well; minivets and rosy pastors are seen at the top of tall trees with flowers that match so naturally with their colourful feathers.

This year during the October holidays, I went with a group of students to Mussoorie with the main object of watching and studying the behaviour of birds.

We found a turbulent stream of cold and crystal-clear water, where we had been told by one of our friends that we could expect to see plenty of Forktails and Redstarts. Day after day we went up and down the stream. It was a beautiful spot. The stream in some places had more than 5 feet of water and some parts were only 10 to 12 inches in depth. There were plenty of boulders of every size and shape, and waterfalls from 10 to 60 feet or more in height. Access to the stream had been easy but running up and down the stream was a different matter since the vegetation along the stream in some places was so thick and tall that the overhanging branches give the appearance of short tunnels or triumphal arches. The spot was really a paradise not only for forktails and Redstarts but also for some other birds. In the inner part of the forest along the stream we watched the Sultan Tit, the Firetail, Yellow backed Sunbird, the Stripethroated Sibia, and many other birds of the Himalayan Region.

In this beautiful wilderness we found plenty of Forktails, White-capped Redstarts, Plumbeous Redstarts and the dippers. The birds were in perfect harmony among themselves and we noticed that some individuals were also not shy and reserved, and did not at all mind our watching, but others looked at us as if they resented or were afraid of our presence and our observations.

The Whitecapped Redstart was always the first bird to be seen standing on the boulders at the centre of the stream, sometimes leaping from one boulder to another, now and then the bird ran swiftly over the boulders trying to get at some of the water insects. On other occasions it seemed as if it was trying to catch some of the flying insects in Flycatcher fashion. The bird was not shy, even allowing us to observe him from a short distance. We noticed that it was often in the company of two or three Plumbeous Redstarts.

The Plumbeous Redstart: We found it to be rather shy at our presence. It used to make a few short flights to the boulders in the centre but usually it kept more to the sides of the stream. Its movements were swift and energetic. Sometimes it flicked its tale and now and then a pair of them chased each other. At times it used to disappear behind the boulders and losing sight of it one would think it had been carried away by the current. The way it caught insects, it looked more like a flycatcher. Nevertheless, more often, it used to catch insects at the edges of the stream. We note the fact that most of the birds we saw were females but I presume that some were young males and that they had not yet acquired adult plumage.

The Forktails: We saw three varieties of Forktails -- the Slate Forktail, the Western Forktail, and the Little Forktail. The Forktail seems to be shy by nature. We found some difficulty in making close observations which was further complicated by the density of the vegetation for we could not make use of the binoculars. We had to resort to all sorts of complicated strategy to have a chance to observe them at a reasonable distance, and then the moment even the Forktails discovered our presence they used to fly off the stream at once. On other occasions they used to retreat to a strategic boulder or some patch of vegetation at the middle of the stream watching us intently. If we persisted for a long time at our watching they used to dart into the forest and fly by the side of the stream for 50 or 70 yards and finally return to the stream. At times they used to make tripping runs, and short flights from stone to stone. Other times they used to be seen at the water's edge for insects. The graceful movement of their tails is not exactly like the wagtails'. We should rather say it is a swayed gentle movement then a jerky wagging up and down. When flying along the stream they fly rather low and when suspicious of some danger they fly in twos or threes one after the other. On these occasions their speed seems to be very fast, otherwise we used to see them singly and at a rather long distance from each other. I must say that looking at their colour, size, shape, elegance, and the grace of their movements in the environment where Nature has placed them I consider them to be one of the most fascinating and delightful kind of birds to watch.

The Brown Dipper: At the uppermost part of the stream, over 6000 feet, we found a single pair of dippers. Some way or the other their favourite spot was more densely shadowed by the tallest trees and more dense vegetation. And as it was the Brown Dipper, at times, it was difficult to locate their whereabouts; only by patiently waiting till they actually flew from boulder to boulder could they be spotted. When we caught sight of them we could follow their movements. They were seen at the central boulder of the stream, and where the water was more turbulent and rapid more often, perhaps, than the Redstarts thus giving the impression that the dipper likes and loves the wildest parts of the stream. They appear to be rather plump and stout birds resembling a thrush with a very short tail. Their flights were short and the movement of their wings rapid and they followed the course of the stream with ease, swaying from side to side among the boulders and



and always keeping rather low and near the surface of the water.

It was a most amusing sight to see the ease with which they used to dip into the stream. Sometimes it looked as if by accident the dipper had slipped from the boulder and fallen into the water. Their entrance into the water was effortless and certainly there was not a single time when the act of submerging could be called a dive. The legs were always first when touching the water and the rest of their bodies followed without a change in this position. The dipper appears at the surface of the water as easily as it submerges and then jumps to the boulder. This operation is performed so neatly that it looks as if the dipper springs from the bottom of the stream to the top of the boulders in a single continuous action as if there were no water at all. This is a different way from that of the divers and other aquatic birds which rise from the surface of the water.

We wanted to verify whether each pair of the Forktails, Redstarts, and Dippers keep to a definite territory or part of the stream but owing to the thickness of the vegetation along the stream it was not possible for us to come to a definite conclusion. We only noticed that late in the evening at certain spots to which we had more easy access, we could always see the same bird; the Forktails and Dippers were always by themselves and the White-capped, and Plumbeous Redstarts together.

A. Navarro, S.J.  
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Bombay 1

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#### A SHIKRA ATTACKING YELLOWEYED BABBLERS

While birdwatching at Trombay (Bombay suburbs) on 22 December, I witnessed an interesting incident. It was about 11 a.m., and I was about to return home after an enjoyable morning's birdwatching, when on a bush by the roadside I observed about half a dozen Yelloweyed Babblers (Chrysomma sinensis) tittering in an agitated manner. They seemed to be aware of the presence of some danger in the neighbourhood.

Presently they flew into a nearby low tree where a Shikra (Astur badius) was sitting unnoticed all the while. The influx of so many babblers right into its den must have surprised the shikra, for it dropped to the ground. It then started pursuing the babblers which had by now regained their wits and cleverly avoided the shikra by keeping into the innermost branches of a dense bush where the shikra could not follow. A few babblers then flew into a bush by whose side I was sitting, with the shikra in hot pursuit. Despite my best attempts at concealing myself, the shikra noticed my presence and flew away. I was sorry to have thus abruptly terminated a drama of the wild which one is rarely privileged to see.

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Bombay 5

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## KOEL, CROWS, AND A DOG

It was about 7.15 a.m. on 4 April 1963. I was returning from Rajkot Railway Junction. As the atmosphere was exhilarating, I decided to walk down to my place -- a distance of about two miles -- keeping my eyes and ears alert for any bird activity. When I was nearing Sardar Bag, the Circuit House, I witnessed a strange episode in the compound garden of a nearby bungalow.

A young koel was standing in the compound near a mendi hedge. It was a young male considerably bigger than a myna in size. It was surrounded by three or four crows who pecked it in turn at an open patch on the rump. The patch was devoid of feathers and looked whitish to me at a distance of about 20 yards. The koel turned towards its tormentor shrieking feebly in protest. This affair might have been going on for a long time, because when I came upon the scene, the koel seemed very exhausted. Then a crow pecked at the rump, it simply turned its neck in that direction in defence. In the meanwhile another crow from the rear used to jab with its beak. Thereupon the poor young koel turned towards its new persecutor. As soon as it did this, another crow from behind gave a sharp peck. This went on as if planned. All the while the helpless koel was losing ground in this strange and uneven battle. Sometimes three crows and sometimes four to five joined in this nefarious affair. It was too much for the koel to cope with those villains.

After repeated attacks from the crows, it gave up, for a little while, its feeble protests, whereupon a crow began to tug and pull the poor victim. When it became intolerable the koel exerted weakly in self defence.

When this was going on, a dog came on the scene and the crows flew away to a branch of a nearby tree. The koel saw it but did not try to fly. Perhaps it was not possible for it to fly due to exhaustion. The dog circled around for some time shamefacedly coming nearer. The koel then hopped about a little. But somehow the dog could not muster courage to attack the defenceless weakling. On my throwing a stone at the dog, it retreated. Immediately the crows, who were sitting throughout this on the branch of the tree and seemed particularly bent on mischief, alighted around the koel and started tormenting their victim as before.

Again the dog came on the scene and the crows flew as before to the nearby tree. During all these proceedings which I watched for about 15 minutes, no one was seen in the compound. But after the arrival of the dog for the second time, I saw an old man, a mali. I called him and requested to take care of the koel young. As it was getting late for me, I went on my way.

Some points arise in my mind as a result of witnessing this episode.

- i. Is it possible to find koel young so late as even in April?
- ii. Whistler writes that crows' nests are 'occasionally found in November, December, and January'. If the breeding season of the Common Crow is thus a prolonged one, is it that, that of the koel also coincides with it so closely?
- iii. Why is the enmity of the crows towards a koel young whom they normally rear?

Lalsinh M. Raol, Rajkot

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## SOME HINTS FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Despite our precarious borrowings of food, how little do we try to understand the factors that govern our home production of eatables. Birds are a major factor. While to superficial seeming they largely appear as robbers of human food, the truth is that these, our feathered friends are the great factors of our food supplies, because they depend largely for their food on insects which are injurious to plant life.

They are marvellously adapted to their respective fields of activity. Can you imagine any other creature so well fitted to capture flying insects as swallows (ababil) and swifts (babila). So is the woodpecker (kathphorwa). It is provided with strong claws for holding tree trunks when at work, and a stiff wiry tail for an extra support, because a good deal of its time is spent in tree climbing or circling round it in search of food. It has a chisel-like bill driven by powerful muscles for digging and dragging out the concealed larvae out of the bark. If you watch it carefully, you will find that a woodpecker's whole body exhibits wonderful adaptation of means to an end.

Apart from the economic aspect, we must take an interest in those who share the same land as ours, and a more tolerant and happy country would be ours, if our wild flowers and animals were loved and better acquaintance with them cultivated. Surely, if we took more interest in plants and animals, we could not be as intolerant and exclusive in our political and communal dealings as we are now.

Birds are the most visible and lively form of wild life. They are beautiful and graceful creatures. They satisfy our aesthetic sense through their handsome plumage and their sweet voices. Flight, song, and nesting are the main features of the bird's way of life, and it is so different from ours!

Hence the need for a greater understanding of our birds. This could be possible if birdwatching developed as a hobby. The main aim of the Newsletter for Birdwatchers is to encourage a large number of lay persons to take up birdwatching and to help with information.

Out of the 2000 odd birds found in India, a great majority are merely geographical races and the main main species are fewer in number. Out of these 200 are common, being found all over India and they can be identified easily from the standard book on Indian birds, i.e. Selin Ali's THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS. This book describes the field characters of the 200 common birds and has coloured plates illustrating each description.

A very useful and inexpensive book on methods of bird study is that by James Fisher entitled WATCHING BIRDS, and published in the Pelican series (A 75). The little book discusses the entire range of bird observation and all the different methods employed. I can safely say that any person making intelligent use of this book and THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS will turn out a good field ornithologist within a year.

Before aiming at bird study, the ABC of birdwatching must be learnt. The tools needed are few; a note-book, a pencil, and a good pair of eyes and ears. The first and most important step is identification of the living bird, and it is a fascinating game of skill between the bird and the watcher, each trying to outwit the other.

Summer is a good time to begin identifying birds; then they are easier to see and there is no confusion with winter visitors. Early morning and late afternoons are usually the best times for observation, partly because most birds are then active and singing, and partly because there often is little wind movement then. Cool days, with strong winds are unfavourable for bird study.

Birds mostly live in trees and they must be looked for where there are trees. Those whose study of birds must be confined merely to the city, can best observe them in parks, cemeteries, or mango and fruit orchards. Most birds are likely to be seen on trees like the banyan, the peepal, and the sirai and paras when these are in bloom. Any jheel, particularly in winter, is a veritable paradise for the birdwatcher.

The more common and familiar birds can be observed very easily, but in many cases it will be necessary to get close to a shy or rare bird for observation. This often proves difficult, and we can do no better than imitate wild animals that succeed in getting close their quarries. The secret of their success is, that they are protectively coloured, have softly padded feet ensuring noiseless movement, crawl close to the ground keeping concealed as much as possible, and are slow and deliberate in their movements. Most birdwatchers on the other hand, are dressed conspicuously, and use leather soled shoes. Their tread seems to shake the ground, they crackle dead leaves and dry twigs underfoot, they walk erect and even talk loudly. They swing their arms and move about quickly and purposelessly. All these are menacing and fearsome to the shyer birds.

If you want to succeed, in dress avoid black, white, and all striking colours and contrasts. A dull, dead leaf colour or dull green is very good. Failing this, certain greys or browns harmonizing with natural objects or a violet colour can be adopted. Shoes must have rubber soles which are noiseless and also prevent the feet from slipping over rocks or leaf-covered hillsides. Avoid dry leaves by going out in the early mornings when the leaves are moist, and do not tread on dry sticks, as sharp sounds alarm all wild creatures. Birds have eye-sight superior to ours, and in approaching them it is necessary to use as cover, trees, shrubs or grasses. Often it may be necessary to crawl. When approaching shy birds in the open, a zig-zag, circular or sidelong course may bring you much nearer than will direct forward movement. Have no quick, or jerky movements and do not hurry; these attract attention very quickly. Sometimes you can get even shy birds to come close to you, if you lie or sit very still so as to merge in the surroundings. Above all, watch alone, unless you can get a companion bent on the same errand as you.

(Mrs.) Jamal Ara

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#### BIRD COUNT

(Reproduced from Christian Science Monitor 1962)

To Robert W. Wells who recently wrote that delightful article in this space wondering how the birds get South, I would like to say, 'I don't know either, but they're here and we've just counted them.'

The occasion was the 61st annual Christmas Bird Count held by the National Audubon Society, and participated in by thousands of enthusiastic birders all over the United States and Canada. Just 61 years ago in 1900 Dr. Frank M. Chapman organized the first count. In that year only 27 people participated, sending in 25 reports. Last year over 10,000 observers helped with the count, sending in 629 reports. Here in Bradenton we made our count three days after Christmas.

C. Day dawned rather unpromisingly with a good hard shower. But undaunted (a real birder is rarely if ever daunted) we set out for our appointed area. Each local count is held within a 15-mile radius. Within our 15 miles we had 15 groups assigned to different areas. Our party of four was to count in Palmetto, our neighbouring town, and Sneed's Island, a wild undeveloped straggle of mangrove and palmetto.

We were no more than five blocks down our main street when we made our first sighting, way out of our own territory and therefore not something we could put on our list, but nevertheless, we felt, a good omen for the rest of the day. There, in the very top of a dead pine, not a block off the highway, perched our local pair of bald eagles, white heads brilliant against the gray sky. A good way to start.

Our first actual count started just over the bridge in Palmetto where we discovered 23 laughing gulls, one herring gull and some 200 lesser scaups bobbing about in the gray choppy waters of the Manatee River. A cold north wind was sweeping in behind us and at this point there was some question as to why the annual count was made at this particular time of year, especially when we remembered that more hardy bird watchers up North were braving below-zero temperatures and deep snow on the same mission as ours. But at this time of year the winter migration is finished and the bird population is at its most stable all over the country.

Next we spotted a single cormorant sitting on an old piling, wings spread in the wind drying his feathers. The cormorant and his fresh-water equivalent, the anhinga, somehow got slighted by nature. They are the only two water birds that do not have oil glands in their feathers to shed water. Consequently each time they finish fishing they must hang out their feathers to dry, so to speak, and I wonder if they ever envy the gulls and ducks and pelicans who dash in and out of the water without ever getting wet.

We hurried on to our island hoping to arrive before all the water birds that roost there took off for their day's foraging. Down a dirt causeway winding narrowly between the river and bay we came upon at least half a dozen magnificent American egrets. These pure white birds, the largest of the egrets, stand at least three feet tall with a wing-spread of four to five feet.

At the end of the island on a small beach five fish crows showed black against the white sand. They are smaller and quieter than their inland cousins and feed along the shores and beaches. They help keep the blue jay population within bounds by robbing their nests. Nature has her own way of keeping her marvelous balance. However, after managing to slide down a wet slope and cover myself with sandspurs, that particular bane of the Florida outdoors, I demanded to know just where in the balance of things sandspurs were needed. Our intrepid leader thought for a moment and then pronounced that every area needed a hardy

Next we hied off into the mangrove to tabulate the warblers that usually abound there. But the wind was howling so loud the warblers were silent and we gave them up.

Coming upon a more civilized part of the island we stopped beside a field where four horses grazed accompanied by a dozen white cattle egrets. The cattle egret is the newest mystery of the American world. It is native to Africa where it accompanies the herds of wild animals and domesticated cattle, eating the insects stirred up by their feet. It was first sighted in the United States about six or seven years ago here in Florida. Since then it has progressed steadily North and sightings have been made as far North as Massachusetts. How it got here is a mystery. Could it have flown or did it come on a cattle boat or was it an escapee in the first instance? No one knows but it has taken hold and is thriving. Last year a rookery of cattle egrets on the east coast of Florida counted 30,000 birds!

Another question re the cattle egret is will its population explode beyond proper bounds? Other species which have been introduced from abroad such as the house sparrow and the starling have not brought their natural enemies with them and consequently have thrived and reproduced to the point of becoming nuisances. It is hoped this will not happen to the cattle egret.

Some birds are easy to identify, others much more difficult. Some birds have different plumage in the winter than in summer, others different plumage from the mature to the immature. We came upon a large pure white bird wading in the shallows which to the casual glance one would have identified as an egret. But in reality it was an immature little blue heron as large as its parents but not yet turned to the dark blue of the mature bird. It is the only American bird that raises its first family while still in its juvenile plumage.

An official day's count should be from sunup to sundown. When we had finished our day we had discovered no rare species. Neither had we come on any spectacular numbers of any one species such as last year's count of 800,000 robins in one roost in Nashville, Tenn. But within our 15-mile radius our 15 groups had seen and identified 107 different species with approximately 13,547 individual birds counted.

But, Mr. Wells, not one lap-winged introvert, yellow-throated dowager or purple-toed flycatcher did we see. Evidently they, too, are still in the dark as to how the birds get South.

Merian Sorenson

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I WENT TO THE WOODS. By Ronald Austing. pp. 144. 44 black and white, and 8 coloured illustrations. London 1963. Hutchinson. Price 30 sh.

The special hobby of the author of this book is taking photographs of wild birds in his studio. This means that he has to: (a) catch the bird; (b) look after it and make it feel at home in his house; (c) get it to behave in artificial surroundings just as it would in its natural habitat; (d) take a picture of it in action. All this sounds far more difficult than it would be to sit patiently in a hide, hoping for a lucky shot. There is a remarkable picture of a kingfisher at the moment it entered the water after fish. The bird had been caught and kept as

a pet, and the pool is a shallow artificial one. In another action picture an owl is caught by the camera in that split second when it fastened on a mouse. About this photograph Eric Hosking says in the foreword: 'If Ronald Austing had taken only one photograph in his life, that of the owl catching the mouse shown on the frontispiece of this book, his name would go down as one of the great bird photographers. The fact that the photograph was taken under controlled conditions does not detract from its value . . .'

Ronald Austing is a Park Ranger and Nature Warden in Ohio, U.S.A. -- a career which seemed to grow naturally out of his life time interest in all wild things, specially birds. His interest in birds was fostered and encouraged by his parents when he was a child, in spite of some bad tree-climbing accidents. He taught himself bird photography on the family Kodak. When he had exploited it to the last ounce of its capacity and asked for more sophisticated equipment, it was gladly given. He soon collected a band of enthusiastic and resourceful friends who helped him in every way. At one stage Austing found that the best camera available had a shutter speed of only 1/2000 of a second. This was not good enough. He wanted a speed of at least 1/5000 to be able to get really clear pictures of birds in swift flight. A friend whose hobby was electronics built for him a flash equipment that reached this standard. An electronic eye was procured which clicked the shutter every time an object crossed the beam, and with this contraption he was able to take remarkable photographs, some of which are illustrated in the book.

It is lucky for the author of this book that his wife shares his great love of outdoor life, and is willing to make sacrifices in order to allow him to further and develop a most exacting hobby

Z.F.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### Peacocks for Japan

The Indian Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Lalji Mehrotra, recently presented 12 peacocks, sent by the Himachal Pradesh Government, to the National Animal Park at Nagasaki, according to a report received in New Delhi.

### Bird Navigation

A lecture was given on the 24th April 1963, at the National Science Foundation in Washington D.C., by Dr. J.T. Emlen, of the University of Wisconsin, describing some experiments he had performed in Antarctica on the homing instincts of penguins. Although investigators are still not fully agreed on the method by which birds navigate, it is thought they probably employ compass navigation based on the position of the sun combined with the time given by a biological clock. Dr. Emlen and R.L. Penney have tested this theory by experiments with Adelle penguins in Antarctica. These penguins nest around the shore of the continent during the summer and spend the winter near the edge of the pack ice where food is available from the sea. It is uncertain whether they drift around the continent during the winter with the ice, but it is known that they return regularly to the same nesting grounds each season.

Penguins were chosen for these experiments for the following reasons:

1. These birds have already been proved to have good homing instincts.
2. They are very hardy and can live for 4 or 5 weeks without any food, so that they can survive a prolonged experiment in barren and lifeless land.
3. The Ross Ice Shelf and the interior plateau of Antarctica, is devoid of land marks which could act as position cues.

In these experiments, penguins were taken by air in closed boxes from the Cape Crozier colony to several remote places a few hundred miles from the sea in featureless areas on the Ross Ice Shelf, near Byrd Station and in the interior of Victoria Land, and were then set free. Twenty birds were used in each experiment and these were released singly, the second one not being released until the first had disappeared from sight. Their tracks were followed visually by two spotting stations spaced 200 metres apart and their courses plotted against time with theodolites. More sophisticated methods of tracking using miniature radio transmitters were proposed, but not used for these experiments.

When the birds were first released they were generally confused for about 15 minutes, after which time they started off in a definite direction on a straight course if the sun was shining. The mean directions taken by the birds from these three areas were parallel generally, with a deviation in course of only two or three degrees. The direction of take off was always consistent provided the sun was shining and their biological clocks had not been disturbed. When clouds obscured the sun, the birds were quite confused and then started off in random directions, but with the reappearance of the sun they resume a straight course a few degrees east of north.

Experiments on their biological clocks were made by superimposing artificial periods of darkness which differed from the normal dark periods. This was done by keeping the birds in dark enclosures from 0900 to 1500 hours and from 1500 to 2100 hours. When they were released, particularly after the first period, their direction keeping was found to have been affected adversely.

The experiments indicated that the birds used the azimuth position of the sun to orient themselves and took account of the time of day as determined by their biological clock. This enables them to travel on a straight course.

The time taken for the birds to return to the nesting ground indicated that they probably travelled from the point of release to the edge of the pack ice and then back from there to their breeding ground. Twelve birds out of 20 released from the Ross Ice Shelf were recovered after having made a journey of at least 180 miles in about a month. Their speed has been measured up to 8 miles per hour. The birds liberated from the other sites have not yet been recovered at their breeding grounds, but as the distances involved were much longer, it is hoped that they may appear later.



## CORRESPONDENCE

Rosy Pastors in Rajkot

Between Bhaktinagar Railway Station and Kalawad Road: I set out for a walk on 11 November at 5.00 p.m. I saw Little Brown Doves, Indian Ring Doves, Blue Rock Pigeons, Roseringed Parakeets, and Common Mynas about the first grove of trees but not the Rosy Pastors. As I proceeded further, my ears picked up the faint chuck-chuck of Rosy Pastors. A few yards ahead of me, I saw about 20 of them, sitting in a babul tree in company with Common Mynas. As I approached it, they dispersed and alighted on another babul. I therefore kept a little away from that tree and set down there. Within a few minutes, small parties of 5 to 15 members came and settled thereon. In about 7 minutes I think there were more than 100 Rosy Pastors. One peculiarity which struck me was the number of Roseringed Parakeets which also continued coming in small parties to the same babul tree of medium size.

During my stroll in the area, I came across other parties of Rosy Pastors some flying, some perching and one party moving in an irrigated field.

Without fear of exaggeration I may say that I saw about 200 Rosy Pastors. Majority of the birds seen had shining black heads, but the black on the wings was dull. The rosy colour also was faint. The number of birds of all round duller colours was also very small.

While I was hastily returning home as it was getting dark, I heard the Stone Curlew calling in the distance.

Lalsinh M. Raol

Lalit Nivas, 13 Jagnath Plot, Rajkot

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'Window-tapping' behaviour of the Southern Whitebrowed FantailFlycatcher

The tendency in certain birds to behave excitedly at their reflections is well known. Sunbirds particularly when they happen to fly against a mirror, have been observed to keep pecking at their images for hours on end. The reflectors may be a glazed window, mirror, or even a shiny metal surface, such as the polished hub cap of a motor car.

On 25.8.1963 and again on 10.9.63, I happened to see the Southern Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher 'tapping' against one of the glazed ventilator shutters of the Lotus Club, a roadside building, standing in its garden of mango, tamarind and other trees, not far from the Palace Ground in the south-south-eastern section of Ernakulam town. The ventilator, at the extreme south-eastern corner of the building is nearly twelve feet from the ground and has a ledge in front formed from an extension of the terrace. This served as a convenient 'take-off' for the bird, which flung itself again and again at the glass pane, as if in combat with an adversary. The time was nearly ten in the morning on both the occasions, the shutter was the same and the pattern of action was also similar, but whether or not it was the same individual is not certain. The 'tapping' was in progress at the time I noticed it, but was soon interrupted by the approach of visitors.

N.G. Pillai

'Belle-View', Dewan's Road

Ernakulam, Kerala

Peahens flying up with young

Once Mr. Mateen was returning from a country walk. It was 7.30 p.m. in the month of August. He suddenly saw a peahen sitting under a tree with four chicks. Being interested in birds he observed them unnoticed for some time.

He saw to his utter amazement the two chicks quickly hopping on to the peahen's shoulder while the other two waited patiently. He saw the peahen slowly take off vertically with the two chicks on her shoulder; she did this by flapping her wings vertically with powerful strokes. She rose in the air slowly like a helicopter and then perched on a branch of the tree. The chicks then quickly hopped off her back and sat on the tree. While the peahen descended and the process was repeated for the second time, all the four chicks were safe on the tree.

Hitenra Singh

(Age 15 years)

Natural History Society, Mayo College  
Ajmer

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The Southern Greybacked Shrike

The shrike's power to imitate the calls of other birds is well known.

A sportsman was watching the beaters disperse on a Woodcock shoot in the downs of Ootacamund, when he was startled by a junglecock calling from quite close to where he stood. The call came from a small, rather open patch of shrubs with one or two small trees in it. The hunter scanned every inch of the ground covered by the patch of shrubs with his eye, but could not locate the jungle cock.

The call continued and it was only after some time he found a shrike perched on a dried branch of one of the small trees and merrily mimicking the call of a junglecock. It really amused the sportsman to find himself fooled like this, particularly he being one who can imitate a junglehen and fool a cock to answer and even to come into sight.

M.R. Devadhas

Nonsuch Estate, Coonoor P.O.

Nilgiris, S.I.

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Need for outings

On my weekly trips to Byram Baug, Bombay I have been observing quite a good number of birds. On Sunday, 15 December 1963, I was fortunate to have with me Mr. Serrao of the Bombay Natural History Society and Mr. V. Rao of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. We saw over 30 species of birds in this locality.

Bharat Scout Camp is situated on a hillock on the west of Godbunder Road (Byram Baug the place is popularly known) about two miles from the Jogeshwari station. A stable owner has this year grown grass on both sides of the road leading up the hillock. This place is watered by the drains from the nearby stables, and is a good place for birds.

Some of the birds we saw were the swallows, blackbellied finches, wagtails, both white and yellow, and egrets. It was 12 noon when we decided to call it a day and return. We took

to the cart track, and on the way saw a good number of white wagtails feeding among the drying cowdung cakes.

Our last bird was a Pond Heron (Ardeola grayii) in a grass field. I saw more birds in a day than I had ever seen, and due to the guidance of both Mr. Serrao and Mr. Rao I learnt many new ways of recognising them. I am sure, such outings arranged once a month at different places would bring in more members to our Club.

B.A. Palkhiwalla  
Hon. Camp Warden

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### Birdwatchers' Group at Rajkot

You will be gratified to read that the cautious beginning of a Birdwatchers' Group we had formed here has been successful and our second meeting saw 15 people, all genuinely keen. We are all going out to see duck on 29th December morning. I have to discuss the future of this little group and give you my report which I should have done during the Annual General Meeting.

K.S. Lavkumar  
Rajkumar College, Rajkot  
25 December 1963

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE BIRDWATCHERS' FIELD CLUB OF INDIA AND THE THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SUBSCRIBERS OF THE NEWSLETTER FOR BIRDWATCHERS

The First Annual General Meeting of the Birdwatchers' Field Club of India and the Third Annual General Meeting of subscribers to the Newsletter for Birdwatchers was held at the rooms of the Bombay Natural History Society, 91 Walkeshwar Road, Bombay 6, on Saturday, the 14 December 1963 at 4 p.m.

The following were present:

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Mr. B.G. Ghate, I.A.S.   | 10. (Mrs.) R.W. Ghate     |
| 2. Mr. P.V. George          | 11. (Mrs.) L. Nilakanta   |
| 3. Mr. B.A. Palkhiwalla     | 12. (Mrs.) Leeq Futehally |
| 4. Mr. V. Udaya Shankar Rao | 13. Miss Mehra Dubash     |
| 5. Dr. Gopal Datt           | 14. Mr. J.A. Gritonde     |
| 6. Mr. J.C. Daniel          | 15. Mr. N. Nilakanta      |
| 7. Mr. P. Kannan            | 16. Mr. S.V. Nilakanta    |
| 8. Mr. V.C. Ambedkar        | 17. Mr. Zafar Futehally   |
| 9. Dr. A.K. Joshee          | 18. Mr. J.S. Serrao       |

Mr. B.G. Ghate, I.A.S. was elected Chairman of the meeting.

1. Messages and suggestions received from: Mr. Joseph George, Mr. Harshavadan Gor, Mr. S.K. Reeves, and Mr. R.A.S. Melliush were read.

2. Minutes of the last annual general meeting of subscribers of the Newsletter held on 23 December 1962 were read and confirmed.

3. The Draft Constitution of the Club circulated earlier was approved with the following change:

Article 4, section 2, paragraph 2:

After the word 'Secretary' insert 'or a Treasurer nominated by him'.

'All drafts and cheques of the Club shall be signed by the Secretary...'. After 'Secretary' add: 'and/or Treasurer'.

4. The following office bearers were appointed for the year January/December 1964:

Dr. Salim Ali, F.N.I. (President)

Regional Secretaries & Editors

Y.S. Shivraj Kumar	K.S. Lavkumar
Capt. N.S. Tyabji	Mr. E.P. Awari
Mrs. Usha Ganguli	Mrs. Jamal Ara
Dr. Biswanoy Biswas	Prof. K.K. Neelakantan

Honorary Secretary & Editor

Mr. Zafar Futehally

Honorary Treasurer

Mrs. L. Nilakanta

5. Financial report from Mr. Zafar Futehally:

Mr. Futehally reported that during the year the following expenditure was incurred:

<u>Newsletter covers</u>	...	...	Rs 777.00
Stencil duplicating paper @ Rs6.50-7 per ream. Total 85 reams.	...	...	550.00
Postage: from 10 n.P to 15 n.P. per <u>Newsletter</u>	...	...	840.00
<u>Newsletter envelopes</u>	...	...	520.00
Duplicating ink (12 tubes) @ Rs11/- per tube. (From Sept. '63 to Dec. '63)	...	...	132.00
Stencils @ Rs11/- per box of 24 sheets	...	...	77.00
Post cards (6 n.P.)	...	...	7.00
Casual labour	...	...	85.00
<b>Total</b>	...	...	<b>Rs 2888.00</b>

During the last month of the year the Newsletter was sent to about 415 people. The number of subscribers were 165.

Mr. Futehally reported that this entire expenditure has been borne by Messrs Garlick & Co. Prvt. Ltd., Messrs. Dynacraft Machine Co. Prvt. Ltd., and himself. As a consequence there is a sum of Rs659/- to the credit of the Club in the saving account with the Bank of India, Andheri Branch. However, in the coming year the policy will be to restrict distribution only to subscribers. Some complimentary copies will be sent to create interest in our Club.

The annual membership of the Club will be Rs5/- and as before members will be entitled to receive the Newsletter free of cost. Members outside India will bear postage charges.

6. Suggestions from members: Mr. Joseph George's suggestion that the Club should take steps to install one nest-box in each school campus in India was approved. It will be the responsibility of the Regional Editors to get schools in their region put up these nest-boxes. In this connection Mr. B.A. Palkhiwala suggested that nest-boxes could also be set up at various scout-ing centres. He agreed to take the matter forward.

The suggestion about issuing badges to members was discussed, but it was felt that this might be taken up in later years.

The question of allowing the Club members to participate in the BNHS/WHO Bird Migration Study Camps would have to be discussed with Dr. Salim Ali. He will be requested to send out a circular at an appropriate time should he consider it feasible to allow club members to participate in these camps.

Mr. R.A.S. Melliush's and Mr. S.V. Nilakanta's suggestion about publishing a list of members with addresses in the Newsletter was accepted. This would enable members in various regions to come in touch with one another.

The suggestion about selecting a bird as a symbol and naming the Newsletter after it was considered. However, it was felt that the present name should be maintained.

7. There was a discussion about the desirability of having a camp at a suitable place where all the members could congregate, listen to a few lectures by experts, and indulge in active birdwatching. Mr. B.G. Ghate kindly offered to investigate the possibility of organizing such a camp near Alibag.

8. The desirability of having regular outings was emphasized by several members. For the Bombay region Mr. V. Udaya Shankar Rao of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay 5 (Telephone 213181, exten. 282) kindly offered to draw up a programme and inform Bombay members about it. Regional Secretaries are requested to do likewise, for their own areas.

The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chair

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Zafar Futehally  
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers  
32-A, Juhu Lane, Andheri, Bombay 58

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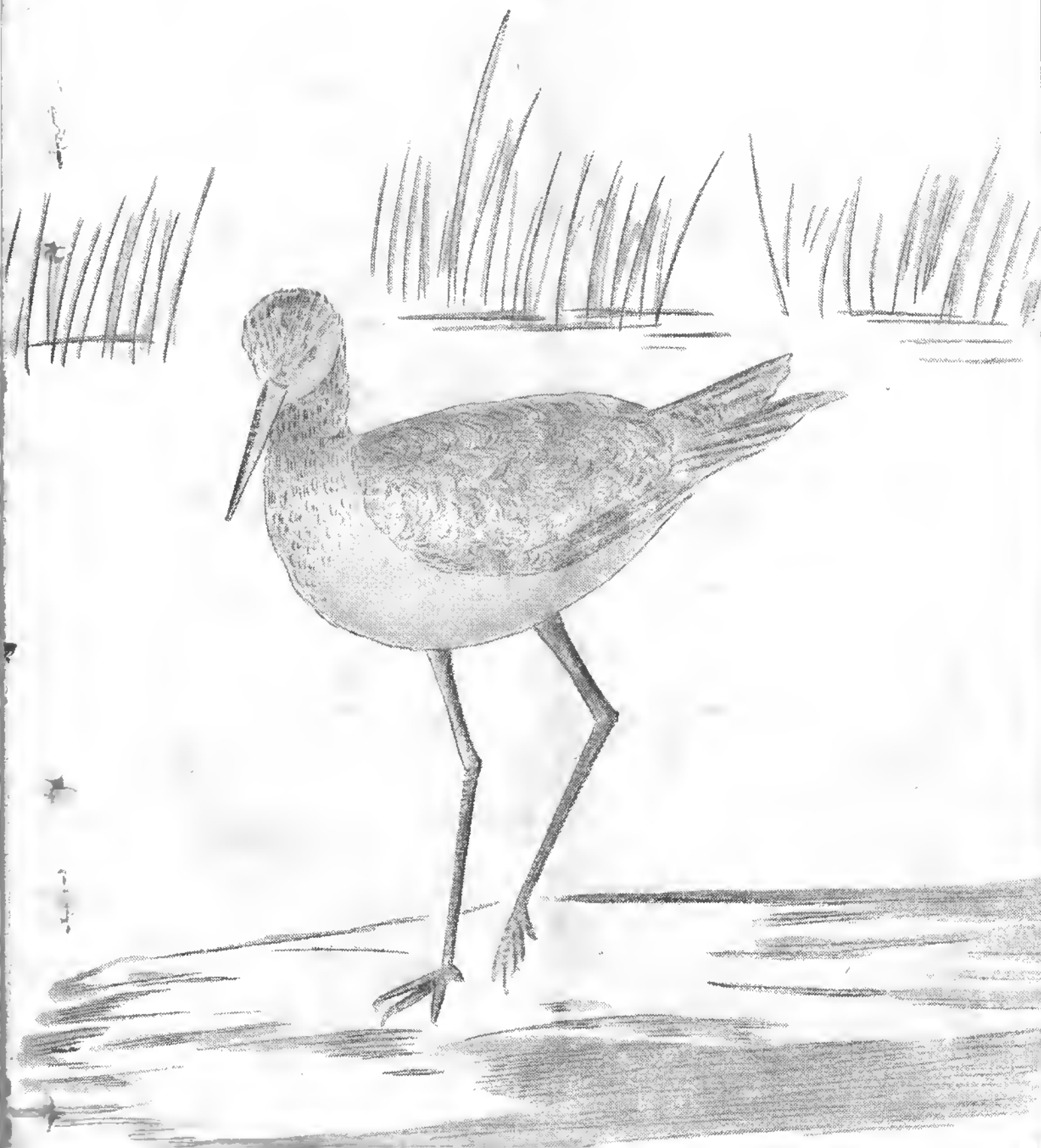
Editor:  
Mr. Zafar Futehally,



# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 February



NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 2

February 1964

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Annual subscription for membership of the Birdwatchers' Field Club of India from 1 January 1964 to 31 December 1964 is now due. Please send a cheque for Rs5/- or money order for this amount to:

Zafar Futehally  
32A Juhu Lane  
Andheri, Bombay 58.

Membership of the Club entitles you to get the Newsletter for Birdwatchers free of cost. Members outside India will have to bear the cost of postage, which is Rs3/- per year for the U.K. and Commonwealth countries for sending 12 copies of the Newsletter by surface mail, and Rs4/- for the United States of America.

Please note that if your subscription is not received by the 20th of February it will be presumed that you are not interested in receiving the Newsletter, and it will not be sent to you from March onwards.

Members who have already sent in their subscription may please disregard this notice.

(Mrs.) Leelavati Nilakanta  
Honorary Treasurer,  
Zafar Futehally  
Honorary Secretary

Birdwatchers' Field Club of India.

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### A TOPSY TURVY NEST

Although the Tailor Bird, Orthotomus sutorius, is very common, and its nest is not unfamiliar in many gardens, the successful nest building and raising of a brood in my compound in Juhu, Bombay, gave me and my family immense pleasure and at times we were totally astonished.

Some months back my youngest child Sumedha had built a "nest" in the fork of a Drumstick Tree about 3 feet from the ground. The nest consisted of a lot of paper straw with a central pad of cotton wool in which two abandoned and addled sparrow's eggs were placed in the hope of them being adopted by some passing bird. The child was not disillusioned by us. The nest was left undisturbed.

On the morning of Wednesday 2nd Oct. (a holiday everywhere) we found a Tailor Bird, shouting at the top of its voice, on the Drum-stick Tree. Very often he descended to the fork and selecting a suitable wad of cotton wool would fly off in the direction of my garage, only 20 yards away.

My clumsy efforts to track the bird, only resulted in the bird misleading me to a number of trees, some in my neighbour's compound. Therefore, Sumedha was deputed to remain in the garage and watch the bird. Very soon, the bird was located stuffing cotton wool into its nest.

The nest was a single leaf of the Indian Almond Tree (Terminalia catappa), stitched into a funnel shape. Not only, was the leaf growing about 12 feet from the ground, the most astonishing fact was that the open mouth of the funnel was downwards and the apex upwards.

Any object like an egg placed in the nest was bound to drop out of it. Even the cotton wool was secured by perforating the leaf surface and forcing some of the wool through these perforations in the manner of rivetting.

There were heavy thunder showers on the 12th Oct. By the 15th Oct. it was noticed that the leaf had assumed a reasonably pendant position. This was after the growth of two additional leaves in the same bunch. Now the mouth of the funnel was upwards and the apex towards the ground.

The bird had chosen a leaf which:-

- a) was tender enough for the edges to be drawn together and stitched,
- b) had grown to full area,
- c) could be predicted to grow to the correct pendant position in a given time,
- d) could become more inconspicuous with the growth of additional leaves,
- e) could be guaranteed to remain strong and firm till nesting was completed.

On Sunday 27th Oct. two Tailor Birds could be seen, taking insects in their bills, to the nest, to feed their young. A camera was set up to photograph them. They raised their usual alarm cry of "pip, pip, pip, etc." and tried to lead us away from the nest. They were frightened of the person standing near the camera and showed no fear in entering the nest, when camera, with tripod was left unattended.

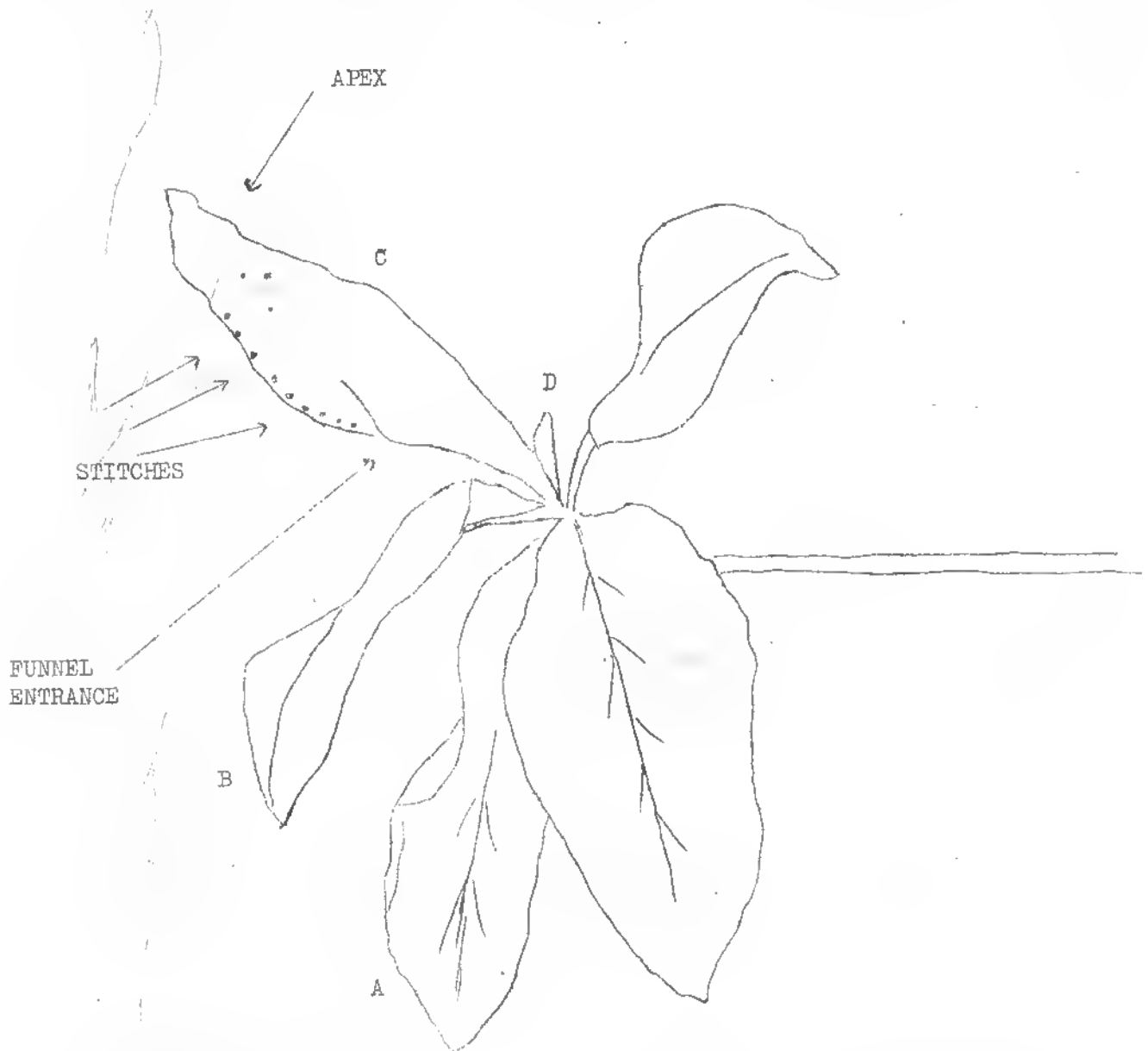
On the 9th Nov. the fledgelings had left the nest and were perching in various other trees and bushes in the compound.

On Sunday, 1st Dec. the nest was removed from the tree. The leaf was still strong and healthy and measured 14" x 7". Many of the older leaves were also strong but were perforated where insects had had their fill.

The tension required to draw the edges together of a full grown mature leaf was measured to be over 20 grammes, and of a full grown tender leaf only 9 grammes. A Tailor Bird weighs less than 6 grammes. Without doubt a tender leaf is easier for stitching.

From what we know of birds, the selection of a suitable leaf is not based on intelligence as the bird brain has no reasoning power. This follows that the bird must have selected the leaf through inherited instinct to do the right thing. Moreover, birds are supposed to be incapable of quickly adapting their behaviour to changed circumstances. Although other trees were available this bird chose to build in this tree. From this it appears that Tailor Birds do build in the Indian Almond Tree. The leaf has to be tender enough and as such leaves generally grow slightly upwards, the nest has to be constructed upside down.

This is an extremely rash conclusion to arrive at after a single isolated observation. May I, therefore, request other readers of the "Newsletter" to watch for corroborative evidence.



- A = OLD TOUGH LEAF
- B = YOUNGER TOUGH LEAF
- C = FULL GROWN TENDER LEAF
- D = NEW LEAF - JUST SPROUTING.

When 'D' grows, C descends to the position of B.

S.V. Nilakanta

MORE BIRD RECORDS FROM THE SURAT DANGS  
(Gujarat State)  
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In the NEWSLETTER FOR BIRDWATCHERS, Vol.2, No.10, 1962, pp. 8-10, I reported some of the uncommon and rare birds collected in the Surat Dangs, Gujarat State.

It is the purpose of this paper to report a few more of the uncommon birds from the Dangs. With the exception of two species (sight records) the following birds were identified by ornithologists in the American Museum of Natural History in New York and by Dr. B. Biswas of the Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta. The scientific names used by these authorities concur with those used by Dr. Ripley in A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, and the distribution ranges also check with Ripley's.

Family Cuculidae

Clamator jacobinus serratus (Sparrman): The Pied Crested Cuckoo

An immature specimen was collected on Nov.7, 1953 at Ahwa (Coll. No.172). A non-breeding male was taken at Ahwa on Oct.19, 1954 (Coll No.354). Uncommon in the Dangs during the southwest monsoon.

Taccouca leschenaulti sirkee (J.E.Gray): The Sirkeer Cuckoo

One specimen was collected on July 17, 1953 at Mulchond, a non-breeding female (Coll. No.103). Another female with enlarged ovaries was collected on Aug.17, 1954 at Mulchond (Coll.No.334). Not common in the Dangs. Resident.

Family Apodidae

Apus melba melba (Linnaeus): The Alpine Swift

On Feb.13, 1954 a non-breeding female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.237). A sparse visitor to the Dangs.

Family Trogonidae

Harpactes fasciatus legerli Koelz: The Malabar Trogon.

A non-breeding male was collected on June 27, 1953 at Ahwa (Coll.No.89). Two more specimens, a non-breeding female (Coll. No.271) and an immature bird assuming male plumage (Coll. No.272), were collected on April 16, 1954 at Bhawandagad. Uncommon resident in the Dangs.

Family Alcedinidae

Pelargopsis capensis capensis (Linnaeus): The Brown-headed Stork-billed Kingfisher

A female was collected on Nov.13, 1953 at Mulchond (Coll.No.179). A male was taken on April 16, 1954 at Bhawandagad (Coll.No.270). Neither was in a breeding state. Fairly common resident at large rivers in the Dangs.

Family Bucerotidae

Tockus birostris (Scopoli): The Common Gray Hornbill

A non-breeding male was collected at Mahal on Feb.10, 1954 (Coll.No.231). The fact that the Dangs hill tribes eat the hornbill may be a contributing factor in its decrease in the Dangs. Resident.

Family Picidae

Picus chlorolophus chlorigaster Jerdon: The South Indian Small Yellownaped Woodpecker

On Feb.6, 1955 while waiting on a machan for a tiger to come over its kill at Bhusda, I first saw this little woodpecker. On Jan.23, 1956 I collected a female with slightly enlarged ovaries, at Ahwa (Coll. No.422). Uncommon in the Dangs. Resident.

Chrysocolaptes lucidus (chersonesus?) Kloss: The Malherba's Golden-backed Woodpecker

As I only have sight records of this species at Mulchond, Pimpri, and Malegaon, I have put a question mark after the subspecies. Dr.Salim Ali, however, has collect this race in the Dangs. This crimson-rumped woodpecker is an uncommon resident in the Dangs.

Family Muscicapidae

Pellorneum ruficeps ruficeps Swainson: The Spotted Babbler

I collected a non-breeding female on April 3, 1956 at Bhusda (Coll. No.441). Not common in the Dangs. Resident.

Dumetia hyperythra albogularis (Blyth): The Small White-throated Babbler

An immature specimen was collected on June 27, 1953 at Mulchond (Coll. No.91). A male in non-breeding condition was taken on July 10, 1953 at Mulchond (Coll. No.99). Fairly common resident in the Dangs.

Musicapa latirostris Raffles: The Brown Flycatcher

I have two sight records for this little flycatcher: Oct. 31, 1955 at Mheskatri and March 15, 1961 at Ahwa. Apparently a rare resident in the Dangs.

Musicapa thalassina thalassina Swainson: The Verditer Flycatcher

On Nov.9, 1953 a non-breeding male was collected at Mulchond (Coll. No.174). An immature specimen was taken on Feb.25, 1955 at Mulchond (Coll. No. 380). Winter visitor to the Dangs.

Rhipidura aureola aureola Lesson: The White-browed Fantail Flycatcher

On Nov.20, 1953 a young specimen with its skull still not ossified was collected at Mahal (Coll. No.184). On Jan.28, 1955 a non-breeding female was collected at Mulchond (Coll. No.373). Sparsely scattered resident in the Dangs.

Terpsiphone paradisi leucogaster (Swainson): The Paradise Flycatcher

A male in non-breeding condition was collected at Bhusda on Mar.27, 1956 (Coll.No.438). Winter visitor to the Dangs. Uncommon.

Terpsiphone paradisi paradisi (Linnaeus): The Paradise Flycatcher

On Jan.22, 1954 a non-breeding male was collected at Mulchond (Coll.No.217). Uncommon resident in the Dangs.

Acrocephalus dumetorum Blyth: The Blyth's Reed Warbler

On Nov.5, 1953 a non-breeding female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.170). On March 26, 1955 a non-breeding male was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.382). Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.



Erithacus svecicus pallidogularis (Zarudny): The Eastern Redspotted Bluethroat

On Feb.1, 1954 a female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.225). Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.

Phoenicurus ochrurus phoenicuroides (Moore): The Kashmir Redstart

On Jan.14, 1955 an immature redstart of this race was collected at Mulchond (Coll.No.371). It is a winter visitor to the Dangs.

Monticola cinclorhynchus (Vigors): The Blue-headed Rock Thrush

On Feb.2, 1963 a dead male was found in Ahwa. I have only a few sight records for this species. Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.

Monticola solitarius pandoo (Sykes): The Blue Rock Thrush

On Dec.24, 1954 a non-breeding female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.369). Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.

Turdus merula nigropileus (Lafresnaye): The Black-capped Blackbird

A non-breeding female was collected on Nov.18, 1953 at Mahul (Coll.No.181). On Jan.15, 1954 a non-breeding male was collected at Mulchond (Coll.No.206). Again a non-breeding female was collected on Feb.27, 1956 at Ahwa (Coll.No.434). Uncommon in the Dangs in winter.

The Surat Dangs in south Gujarat with its tropical semi-evergreen and moist deciduous forest has a rich avifauna.

Ernest M. Shull

Ahwa, Dangs Dist., Gujarat State.

\* \* \* \* \*

EARLY BREEDING RECORD OF THE LITTLE RINGED PLOVER IN BOMBAY  
Charadrius dubius

On New Years day of 1964, I had been out with a few friends for shell collections to Aksa Beach, near Madh Island, Bombay. While collecting shells one of the party picked up a small egg on the sand. It was rather flat on the broad side, but oval shaped, with fine texture without much gloss. The base colour of the egg shell was coloured like sand, it was sandy brown, with a few dark brown irregular lines. It was small, about 30 mm long; it could not be measured correctly as it was already broken in handling and the embryo was visible.

The birds seen on the shore were of only three species. Larus bruniceps - The Brown-headed Gull, Charadrius alexandrinus - The Kentish Plover and C.dubius - The Little Ringed Plover. From the literature available this egg appears to be of the last species C.dubius as it agrees with the description of the eggs by Stuart-Baker (Nidification of Birds of The Indian Empire pp.391-93).

'Burgess found the eggs in the month of December in Deccan.' This statement is presented rather hesitatingly by Oats (Humes' Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds p.338; 2nd Edition). Stuart-Baker also has mentioned it the same way (loc.cit pp.391-93).

The new record of the egg on the 1st of January with partly developed embryo appears to be of interest. The only surprising thing was to find the egg on a sandy beach within the intertidal Zone of the shore.

P.W.SOMAN  
Bombay.

A PRELIMINARY LIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE KEOLADEO GHANA  
SANCTUARY, RAJASTHAN

The fabulous Keoladeo Ghana Breeding Waterbird Sanctuary in Bharatpur has been the focus of an intensive bird ringing effort, and is becoming an increasingly popular tourist attraction.

To stimulate interest in the sanctuary, the Bombay Natural History Society has published a little booklet entitled BREEDING WATERBIRD SANCTUARY : KEO-LADEO GHANA, BHARATPUR. This booklet, illustrated with several colour and black-and-white photographs by Dr. Salim Ali, includes a list of some birds recorded from the sanctuary, along with a more detailed description of the breeding waterbirds.

Other published articles about the Ghana include:

'Are livestock overgrazing the Keoladeo Ghana Sanctuary in Rajasthan?', in the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society 59:645-649 (1962), by the author (reprints are available on request);

and, in this Newsletter, the following articles have appeared:

'The search for migratory bird roosts in Delhi and Bharatpur'. 2(6):1-4 (June, 1962), by the author;

'Recoveries of ringed birds'. 2(9):1-2 (September, 1962), and 3(6):1-2 (June, 1963), by Salim Ali;

'A visit to Bharatpur, Rajasthan'. 2(10):295 (Oct., 1962), by Yuvraj Shivraj Kumar; and

'A weekend at Keoladeo'. 3(8):8-9 (August, 1963), by Shankar Ranganathan.

In the last article mentioned, Mr. Ranganathan added several birds to the list published in the Bombay Natural History Society's booklet.

In the present article I have incorporated the records published in the booklet and Ranganathan's article, to which I have added 38 additional species observed by me at the Ghana in 1962. The resulting list contains a total of 163 species, which is a fair beginning for a complete list of birds known to occur in the sanctuary. Now it will be possible for other readers of this Newsletter to consult their notes and perhaps add to our list.

Some of the records in this list need confirmation, such as Rosy Pelican, Ringed Plover, Stint, and perhaps the Common Iora. I have seen no records of nightjars in the area.

I visited the sanctuary twice in 1962: from February 27th to March 1st (a trip I made to see the Siberian Cranes), and from April 1st to April 5th (when I helped Dr. Salim Ali and his assistants with the bird ringing project).

In the list of species below, an asterisk (\*) indicates species which have not been previously reported as occurring in the sanctuary. The number in parentheses after my records indicates the date(s) I observed these new birds. The birds are listed in the order presented by S. Dillon Ripley in his A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (1961).

I wish to especially thank Dr. Ali for introducing me to several 'life listers' at the sanctuary, including Marshall's Iora and the Spotted Grey Creeper.

List of Species

Key: (B) = first recorded in the Keoladeo Ghana booklet (undated)  
(R) = first recorded by Shankar Ranganathan 3(8):8-9 (1963)  
\* = first reported by me in this paper

- (1) = seen by me between February 27th and March 1st, 1962  
 (2) = seen by me between April 1st and 5th, 1962

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (B) Little Grebe (Dabchick)                           | (B) Pelican (? species. Ranganathan identified the Rosy Pelican) |
| (B) Large Cormorant                                   | (B) Little Cormorant   |
| (B) Indian Shag                                       | (B) Grey Heron   |
| (B) Darter  | (B) Pond Heron   |
| (R) Purple Heron                                      | (B) Large Egret  |
| * Cattle Egret (2)                                    | (B) Little Egret   |
| (B) Small Egret ( <u>Egretta intermedia</u> )         | (B) Painted Stork  |
| (B) Night Heron                                       | * Whitenecked Stork (1 & 2)                                      |
| (B) Openbill Stork                                    | (B) White Ibis   |
| * Blacknecked Stork (1 & 2)                           | (B) Spoonbill  |
| * Glossy Ibis (1)                                     | (R) Barheaded Goose  |
| (B) Greylag Goose                                     | * Pintail (1)  |
| (R) Brahminy Duck (Ruddy Shelduck)                    | (R) Spotbill Duck  |
| * Common Teal (1)                                     | * Gadwall (1)  |
| * Mallard (1)   | * Garganey (1 & 2)   |
| * Widgeon (1)   | * Redcrested Pochard (1)   |
| * Shoveller (1 & 2)                                   | * White-eyed Pochard (1)   |
| * European (Common) Pochard (1)                       | * Cotton Teal (1 & 2)  |
| * Tufted Pochard (1)                                  | * Blackwinged Kite (2)   |
| (B) Nukta   | (B) Pariah Kite  |
| (R) Honey Buzzard                                     | (B) White-eyed Buzzard   |
| (B) Shikra  | (B) Pallas's (Ringtailed) Fishing Eagle                          |
| (R) Tawny Eagle                                       | (B) White Scavenger Vulture                                      |
| (B) King (Black) Vulture                              | * Marsh Harrier (1 & 2)  |
| (B) Whitebacked Vulture                               | * Osprey (1 & 2)   |
| (B) Pale Harrier                                      | (B) Black Partridge  |
| * Short-toed Eagle (2)                                | (B) Common Peafowl   |
| (B) Oriental Hobby ( <u>Falco severus</u> )           | (B) Siberian Crane   |
| (B) Grey Partridge                                    | (B) Moorhen  |
| (B) Sarus Crane                                       | (R) Coot   |
| (B) Whitebreasted Waterhen                            | * Whitetailed Lapwing (1)  |
| (B) Purple Moorhen                                    | (R) Ringed Plover (? species)                                    |
| (B) Pheasant-tailed Jacana                            | * Wood Sandpiper (1 & 2)   |
| * Redwattled Lapwing (1 & 2)                          | (R) Stint (? species)  |
| * Green Sandpiper (2)                                 | (R) Stone Curlew   |
| (R) Common Sandpiper                                  | (B) Common Green Pigeon  |
| (R) Painted Snipe                                     | (B) Indian Ring Dove   |
| (B) Indian (Common) Sandgrouse                        | (B) Little Brown Dove  |
| (B) Blue Rock Pigeon                                  | * Common Hawk-Cuckoo ( <u>Cuculus varius</u> ) (2)               |
| (B) Red Turtle Dove                                   | * Collared Scops Owl ( <u>Otus bakkamoena</u> ) (2)              |
| (B) Roseringed Parakeet                               | <u>NIGHTJARS</u> ?? No records yet published                     |
| (B) Koel  | (B) Common Kingfisher  |
| (B) Crow-Pheasant                                     | (B) Whitebreasted Kingfisher                                     |
| (B) Dusky Horned Owl                                  | (B) Green Bee-eater  |
| (B) Spotted Owlet                                     | (B) Indian Roller  |
| (B) House Swift                                       | (B) Common Grey Hornbill   |
| (R) Pied Kingfisher                                   | (B) Crimsonbreasted Barbet (Copper-smith)                        |
| (B) Bluecheeked Bee-eater ( <u>M. superciliosus</u> ) | (R) Mahratta Woodpecker  |
| (B) Hoopoe  | (R) Blackbellied (Ashy-crowned) Finch-Lark                       |
| * Large Green Barbet (2)                              | (R) Indian (Eastern) Skylark                                     |
| * Wryneck (1)   | (B) Striated Swallow   |
| (B) Goldenbacked Woodpecker                           | (B) Rufousbacked Shrike  |
| (B) Redwinged Bush Lark                               | (R) Blackheaded (Brahminy) Myna                                  |
| * Rufoustailed Finch-Lark (1 & 2)                     | (R) Pied Myna  |
| (B) Short-toed Lark                                   | (B) Bank Myna  |
| * Common Swallow (1)                                  | (B) House Crow   |
| (B) Baybacked Shrike                                  |  |
| (B) Black Drongo                                      |  |
| (B) Rosy Pastor                                       |  |
| (B) Common Myna                                       |  |
| (R) Indian Tree Pie                                   |  |

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|---|--|
| (B) Jungle Crow                                   | (B) Common Wood Shrike                                 |
| * Shortbilled Minivet (1)                         | (B) Small Minivet                                      |
| (R) Common Iora (could it have been Marshall's ?) | * Marshall's Iora (2)                                  |
| (B) Redvented Bulbul                              | (B) Whitecheeked Bulbul                                |
| (B) Common Babbler                                | (R) Yelloweyed Babbler                                 |
| (B) Jungle Babbler                                | (B) Large Grey Babbler                                 |
| (B) Greyheaded Flycatcher                         | (B) Redbreasted Flycatcher                             |
| (R) Paradise Flycatcher                           | (B) Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher                     |
| (B) Tailor Bird                                   | (B) Rufousfronted Wren-Warbler                         |
| (B) Booted Warbler                                | (B) Great Reed Warbler                                 |
| (B) Dull Green Leaf-Warbler                       | (B) Lesser Whitethroat                                 |
| (Phylloscopus trochiloides)                       | (B) Bluethroat   |
| (B) Black Redstart                                | * Magpie-Robin (1 & 2)                                 |
| * Collared Bush Chat (Stonechat) (2)              | (B) Brown Rock Chat                                    |
| * Chestnutbellied Nuthatch (2)                    | (R) Pied Bush Chat                                     |
| (R) Indian (Paddyfield) Pipit                     | (B) Indian Robin                                       |
| (B) Yellowheaded Wagtail                          | (B) Spotted Grey Creeper                               |
| * Grey Wagtail (2) (one male in breeding plumage) | * Yellow Wagtail (2) (most common species ringed)      |
| (B) Purple Sunbird                                | * White Wagtail (1 & 2)                                |
| (B) House Sparrow                                 | (B) Tickell's Flowerpecker                             |
| (B) Yellowthroated Sparrow                        | (B) White-eye  |
| (R) Red Munia                                     | (R) Spanish Sparrow                                    |
|   | (R) Baya Weaver Bird                                   |
|   | (B) Whitethroated Munia ( <u>Lonchura malabarica</u> ) |
| (R) Redheaded Bunting                             | (R) Crested Bunting                                    |

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[In the articles listed in the third paragraph of this paper, Mr. Donahue has omitted reference to one by Dr. Salim Ali entitled 'The Keoladeo Ghana of Bharatpur (Rajasthan)' which appeared at pages 531-6 of Vol. 51(3) of the J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. -- Ed.]

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BRIEF NOTES ON OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS  
Extracts from Bulletin No.9; January 1964, of the Nature  
Study Club of Guñtur, Andhra Pradesh

October 1963. The Common Swallow and the Common Gree Bee-eater arrived in numbers; later, in the course of a few days they began spreading out widely.

The Booted Warbler, which was first noticed by us during the previous winter, was found to have returned on the 28th. Yellow-brown Warbler too had returned; this bird we noticed during the previous winter also.

Towards the end of the month the male Purple Sunbird was found in its full breeding plumage, which struck us as rather unusual.

November and December 1963. The Short-toed Eagle, hitherto totally unfamiliar to us, has been identified; the bird made its appearance in the town a few times sailing magnificently high up in the sky.

We used to see the Eastern Grey Wagtail as well as the White Wagtail flying in a definite direction, from southwest to northeast, as they returned every evening to their roosting places. Our attention was attracted by the fact that they continued to fly in much the same direction throughout this period.

Early in December the Purple Sunbird disappeared from our surroundings and has been absent since then. This made us realise that even residents may not be seen the year round in a particular locality as they may keep moving about in the same region depending on the availability of food.

Observations by various members of the Nature

BULLETIN OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE.

The International Union for the Protection of Nature issues periodically bulletins giving information about the activities of various member states in the cause of Nature Conservation. This body plays the same role for safe-guarding the interests of birds and animals as the United Nations does for the interests of the human race. The following extracts are reproduced from the issue of Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1953:

WHERE NATURE IS PROTECTED

The re-discovered bird. — The Takahe (*Notornis hochstetteri*) 'archaic bird, wonderful living fossil' is just a relic as far as Science is concerned. A native of New Zealand, where up to the arrival of Captain Cook, birds formed the principal class of vertebrates, it suffered, as did other birds from the introduction of predatory mammals. Some Europeans saw the first specimen in 1849, and promptly killed and ate it! In 1898 a dog caught a young female Takahe. The remains of this specimen, as well as those of three other specimens taken before, were for half a century the only traces of this bird preserved in Museums. In 1948 Dr. G.B. Orbell aroused the emotion of naturalists all over the world, when he discovered on the left bank of Lake Te Anau, in the South Island of New Zealand, first the foot prints, and later on, on 21st November, a colony of the very birds themselves. Naturally the New Zealand Government forbade all approach, except to certain accredited scientists, to the birds habitat, a region of some 1.800 square metres. The last expedition organized by the Museum of Canterbury succeeded in seeing two colonies of *Notornis*, at some little distance from the spot where Dr. Orbell discovered the first specimens in 1948. One colony consisted of six birds and included a pair with small chick (Information Bulletin of Pacific Science Association, February 1953).

The curious outline of the Takahe resembles that of other flightless birds of New Zealand, such as the weka, or kiwi, but the Takahe is larger and weighs about seven pounds. His plumage is sumptuous, indigo blue, iridescent on shoulders, head, neck and breast, then of a green metallic colour along back, belly and thighs passing into dark purple, while beak and feet are of startling bright red. These birds, which have escaped the attention of men for so long, owe their survival to the inaccessibility of their habitat.

Birds of prey in Morocco. Thanks to the action of M.J.B. Panouse of the 'Institut Scientifique Cherifien' and to the foresight and intelligence of the 'Direction des Eaux et Forêts' of Morocco, the 'Conseil supérieur de la Chasse' of the Protectorat, has ordained that all birds of prey which up to the present have figured on list of injurious animals, shall be taken off that list, and that hunting and shooting them in future, shall be authorized only on same conditions as apply to non-migratory game. How appropriate the law is will be seen from the fact that the number of birds of prey killed in Morocco in 1952 reached a total of 3.000 of which 1.500 were hawks. It must be remembered that the balance between birds of prey and the animals they prey on, cannot be assessed by simple mathematical figures, except in cases of one type of bird of prey and one type of animal preyed on. In reality it is rare for a prey to be attacked by a single predatory animal, and also human intervention adds to the difficulty of forming an exact balance. Thus birds of prey destroy a great amount of rats; the destruction of the former increases the amount of the latter, who in their turn bring havoc on the partridge of Oued Cherrat, for instance, so that what is gained by the destruction of birds of prey injurious to game, is rapidly lost by the injuries caused to this same game by the increase of other types of predatory animals, exposed in the same way to attacks of birds of prey.

Extracts from other bulletins of the International Union for the Protection of Nature relating to birds will be reproduced in future issues of our Newsletter from time to time.

(Z.F.)

## CORRESPONDENCE

House Sparrow

In response to Dr. Salim Ali's countrywide appeal we started making observations on the House Sparrow since January 1963. Our constant and careful watch has yielded a lot of interesting material. We have published some of this already and shall bring out the rest in instalments.

V. Ravi,  
President, Nature Study Club,  
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

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Koel and Crows

Yesterday the January issue of the Newsletter arrived, and proved interesting, as usual. I hope to see in the next issue a list of members of the club, in hopes that there may be others in this region with whom to compare notes. Bird-catching is fascinating in this particular spot, where there are shore-birds, water-birds, and land birds in profusion, including some Ceylon species.

The incident of 'Koel, Crows and a Dog' reminded me of an event that happened here on July 19, 1963. It was during working hours, so my observations were not as complete as they should have been, being confined to walks between building in this spacious portia tree shaded compound.

At that time our trees harboured many nesting crows, and busy koels. That morning at 10.45 the crows set up a terrific din, and as I walked to a class I observed about 50 of them sitting screaming on the roof of a school building, or flapping excitedly around a near-by tree. There wasn't time to do more than wonder what was exciting them so much that the crow population from the whole neighbourhood seemed to be gathering in agitated protest about something.

My class was out of sight and sound of the riot, and when I returned forty minutes later the mob had dispersed, although there were still a few crows sitting about in the trees watching one particular spot. There a crow, on a broad branch of a tree, was tearing and eating the corpse of a female koel.

All the rest of the day and for several days thereafter a male koel flew around the compound calling loudly the regular mating call. It was so noticeable that a neighbour asked me next day if I had noticed how disturbed that koel was. We wondered if this event was the execution of a koel caught invading a crow's nest in order to lay an egg. Are there other records of such drastic punishment? Or am I reading too much into an inadequately observed incident?

Miriam D. Brown  
Singaratope, Ramnad, Madras State

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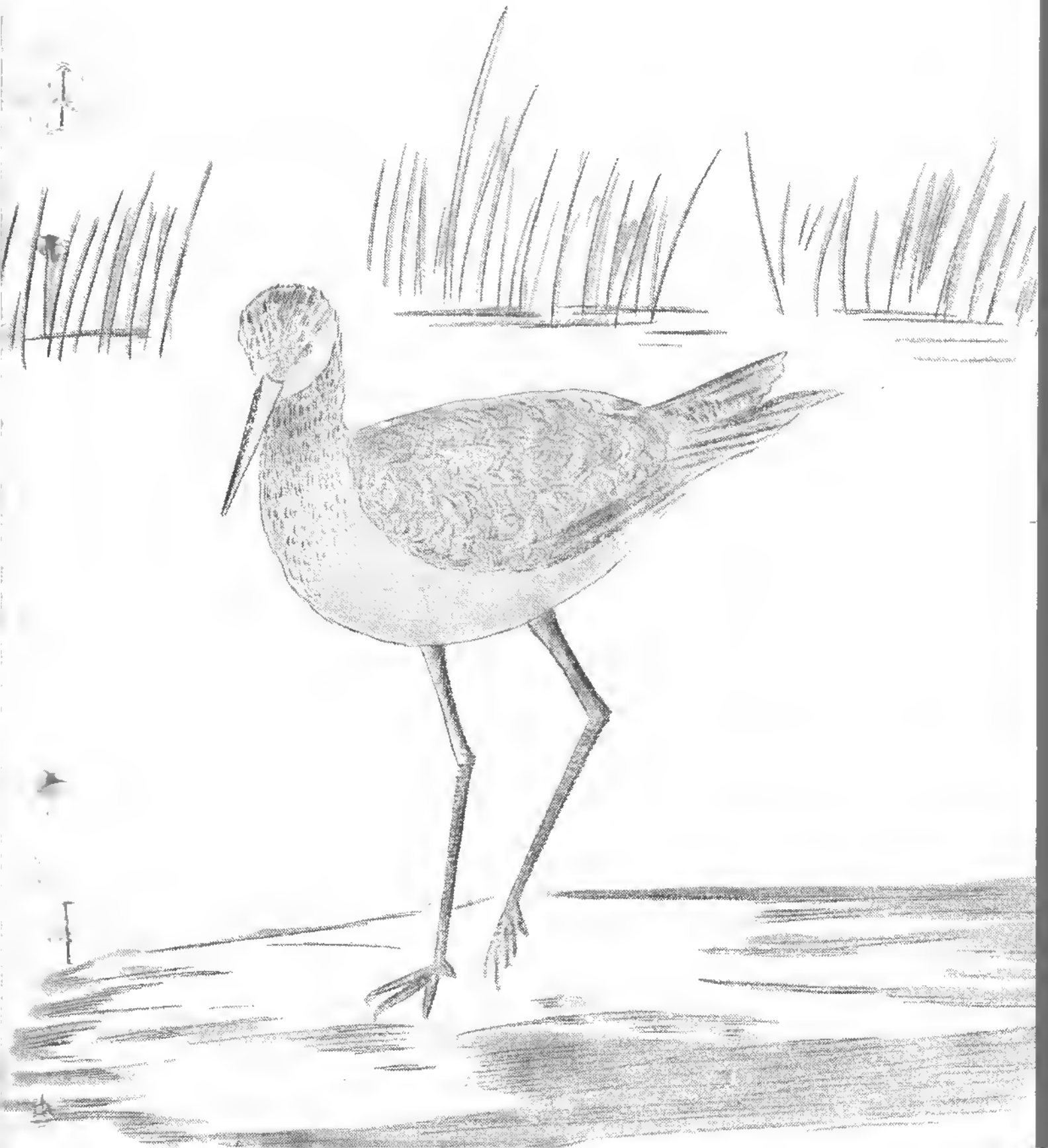
Zafar Futehally  
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# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 March



NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 3

March 1964

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THE ROOSTING HABITS OF THE BARBET

Some remarks on the roosting habits of the Small Green Barbet (Megalaima viridis) have already been published in an earlier issue of the Newsletter. This note describes the discovery of another barbet roost.

The 11th of February (1964) was a sunny, warm day, not noticeably different from the previous few days in point of weather. But from the early hours of the morning there was an unusual excitement among the barbets of the place. All day they kept up a deafening uproar of kutroo-kutroo-kutroo. Most of the time there were at least 3 pairs of barbets in the tall mango tree near my home. Every now and then the birds indulged in mild skirmishes, but between 11 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. they were most vocal and active. At about 1 p.m. five barbets were flying about among the branches, clinging to the bark here and there and pretending to be about to start tunnelling. During this and other times, too, one bird would suddenly fly at another and force it to fly to another perch.

The different sounds produced by these birds were very interesting. Though the regular kor-r-r-r---kotroo-kotroo-kotroo was the dominant sound, various other notes were also heard in the course of the day. A low kirr, a cross between a purr and a screech, always indicated a fight, though quite often two birds indulged in a quarrel without producing any sound. At times two birds sang a regular duet, both uttering the loud kotroo calls; but, sometimes one bird would utter the loud kotroo notes and another would produce a low, soft version of the same 'song'. Once, for a short while, a single bird went on calling kok . . kok . . kok . . kok, very like a Copper-smith, though the tone and the rhythm were unlike those of the smaller bird.

All this excitement made me wonder whether this was the prelude to the breed

-ing activities for the year. I noticed that frequently one bird flew down to a smaller tree close by, and that this bird was at once followed by another. A minute or two afterwards both would return to the tall mango tree. At 6 p.m. I went to a place from where I could see what was going on in the smaller tree. I was just in time to see one barbet slipping into a hole near the top of a dry stump. A minute later another barbet flew to the same hole and pulled the first one out. The evicted bird flew off and the other took its place inside the cavity. A few minutes later a barbet flew to the hole, pulled the occupant out and entered. This happened at least four times. At 6.45 p.m. the light became so poor that I could not see what was happening.

Having studied the roosting habits of the barbet for three years at Chittur-Cochin, I felt that this was nothing more than a struggle for the possession of an attractive roost. However, to rule out the possibility of nesting I kept an eye on the trees the next day.

Barbets were present most of the time on the large mango tree on the next day (12.ii.'64), but there was no repetition of the previous day's activities. Long periods passed without any barbet calling. I started watching the cavity at 6.15 p.m. There was at least one barbet on the same tree then and one or more on the taller tree. At 6.25 one barbet flew to the hole from a branch close by, peeped in and flew off without entering. I think it flew up into the tall tree. At 6.32 another barbet, which seemed to have been quietly hiding among leaves near the hole, entered it. Three minutes later another barbet came, pulled the occupant out and went into the cavity. The ejected barbet flew up, sat on a branch of the taller tree and began calling loudly. The bird in the cavity at once responded from within. At 6.40 this bird came out, sat on a branch close to the roost and called. Then it flew off to the south-west. At 6.45 a barbet appeared suddenly (I wasn't able to say whether it came from the SW!) and entered the hole. Again, by this time the light began to fail and I could not see whether anything happened thereafter.

I had examined the hole from below in the course of the day. It was a beautifully chiselled-out cavity, undoubtedly made by a barbet or a woodpecker. I hope to be able to get a closer look at it soon and should be able to find out whether it ever has been used for nesting. The fact that no barbet was seen going near it in the day time suggests that it is being used now only as a roost.

K.K. NEELAKANTAN

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#### SOME NOTES ON THE NEST BEHAVIOUR OF THE BAYBACKED SERIKE AT KASULI, SIMLA HILLS

In 1961, I was at Kasauli in the month of June. This hill station at a height of 6322 ft. in the Simla Hills is about 22 miles from Kalka. Pine trees predominate interspersed with a few Himalayan Oak, Poplar, and Maple trees adding a little variety to the scene. The grass is completely yellow in early June and some of the hillsides are dotted with clumps of wild raspberry, berberi, and similar bushes.

It is one of the few hill stations in the West Himalayas where nesting is in full swing in June; in others, most of the young birds are at the fledgling stage by this time of the year.

During one of my walks, I found a small pine grows about 30 ft. below the Lower Mall, which for some reason, attracted a large variety of birds. There was always a lot of activity with four species of nesting birds and

several others which nested elsewhere. The visiting birds were Asiatic Cuckoo, Golden Oriole, Blueheaded Rock Thrush, Pied Bush Chat, Stone Chat, Brownfronted Woodpecker, Spotted Dove, Rufousbacked Woodpecker (Lanius ~~xixixixixix~~), Whitecheeked Bulbul, Redvented Bulbul, and Whitecrested Laughing Thrush. The Whitecrested Laughing Thrushes were probably vagrants as I saw two of them only once. The nesting birds were Ring Dove, Drongo, White-browed Fantail Flycatcher, and Baybacked Shrike (Lanius vittatus).

The pair of Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatchers were breeding far beyond their range which is up to 4000 ft. The male was the most pugnacious of the breeding population. All strange birds were subjected to diving attacks -- Asiatic Cuckoo, Redbilled Blue Magpie, Golden Oriole, even Drongos and Shrikes. Once only I saw the female (?) go into a lovely tiny cup-shaped nest fairly high up on a pine tree. I never spotted the nest again though the birds remained in the grove till the end of my stay. I was able to study the Baybacked Shrike's nest behaviour a little better.

The Baybacked Shrike is found in most parts of India from the plains to the foothills of the Himalayas. It occasionally nests up to a height of 5000 ft. and Stuart Baker mentions a nest taken at 6000 ft. in Kote State in the Sirla Hills. He says: 'they generally like small solitary trees standing in cultivation or a bush in a tall fence. The nests (almost invariably fixed in forks of slender branches) are found below rather than above 10 ft. from the ground, but occasionally may be taken from 25-30 ft.' So, on June 7 when I saw a Baybacked Shrike carry food to a nest in a pine tree in the grove, I was most pleasantly surprised. The nest, a neat little cup was placed in the fork of a bunch of pine leaves at the very end of the lowest branch of the tree, about 15 ft. from the ground. As far as I could make out there were three grey-brown, very small nestlings. They opened their bills as soon as a parent arrived at the edge of the nest, but still made no sound. Both parents were bringing food. The sexes were alike though I noticed that the male bird was much more fulvous about the flanks than the female.

On the male bird's fourth visit to the nest, as soon as it had put a bit of food into a nestling's gaping mouth, the female suddenly came and landed next to the male, and then, quivering its wings and opening its mouth, solicited food like the nestlings! The male put the rest of the food into the female's mouth and flew away. Another time when the female was feeding the nestlings the male arrived with food and then the female once again begged food in the same manner and was duly fed. The female then flew to another tree and remained there for some time while the male twice brought food to the young.

The next day the young birds seemed to have grown perceptibly bigger -- craning their necks higher and occasionally quivering their tiny wings at their parent's approach. The mouth was orange-yellow. I could not see if their eyes had opened. The parents were taking turns to feed the young and generally one nestling was fed at each visit. When both parents arrived simultaneously each fed one young bird. Once the Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher suddenly dived at one of the parents. When I left at 6.45 p.m. the shrikes were still bringing food.

It rained on the 8th and the ninth. On the 10th I visited the grove with some trepidation. The nest was damaged and empty. The shrikes were about, but I could not see any nestlings. The next day I saw a shrike carry food to a thick bush near by. I thought I heard a young bird's call from the bush. One of the parents was most agitated and began calling harshly. I saw just the head of one youngster which was half hidden among the leaves. There were dark patches round the yet unopened eyes, the bill was plumbeous, and there were very fine grey-brown and black spots on the head. How the blind nestling reached the bush I do not know.

On the 12th the female was on the bush quivering its wings and making a

peculiar noise, (something like a young bird expecting food). I could not make out whether the nestling was alive. Twice the female flew up to a pine tree next to the nesting tree. A very small branch had sprouted from the trunk of this tree at a height of about 12-13 ft. At the junction of this branch with the trunk sat the female quivering her wings. The third time it went there the male also followed and sat almost touching his mate. Then both flew away. The male visited the bush once or twice, but I was not sure if it carried food.

On the 17th the male was chasing the female. The female flew up to the pine tree, puffing up her feathers pressed her body slightly against the branch and quivered her wings. She went from branch to branch resuming this posture and looking expectantly for its mate. Once she called like a young bird calling for food. The male then flew to the ground, picked up a white grub, bashed it 2-3 times and looked up towards the female. Suddenly it saw me, eyed me for some time and ate the grub. The female came down under the pine tree, then flew up to a point at which a very small branch of the joined the trunk. There was a nest at the junction where I had seen the female begging for food on the 12th! Evidently, the young bird was not going to survive. She probably knew that it would not live and so was selecting the nesting site. Now she sat in the nest and pressing her body turned about slowly to give it a round shape. When she left after a while, the nest was already beautifully cup-shaped. Suddenly the male landed on the dry grass quite close to me, pulled some fine dry grass and some vegetable down with its bill, flew to the nest, put these inside, tried to shape it with his breast like his mate before she flew away. The female now came behind the pine needles close to the nest and began calling like a young bird, the male came and stood next to her; she bent forward a little and he mounted her. I noticed that there was no urgency about finishing the nest, or perhaps it was already complete.

On the 18th the female was sitting in the nest while the male was in a nearby tree. Was there an egg? Presently the male came to the nest and waited. The female after a while left and the male went in. Then with its tail almost touching its head it turned and twisted in the nest pressing hard to shape it. What was going to happen to the egg? It went back to the nest 2 or 3 times shaping it every time, while the female sat on a bush near by. Then he flew down, caught an insect, carried it to the bush and gave it to the female after half a minute. The female ate it slowly. She appeared rather listless that day. After a while she flew back to the nesting branch where the male followed it. Then down she went to the grass and I could not see what she was doing. In her absence, the male visited the nest again twice. When I left she was sitting quietly in her nest while the male sat at the end of the branch.

The next day the female was sitting quietly in her nest. Once the male came and stood next to the nest but she did not leave. She flew down a little later but returned to her nest after a while.

On the 20th at seven in the morning the bird was not at the nest. Shortly, hearing a peculiar noise I looked to see the two Shrikes mating on the nesting branch. As they were slightly covered by pine needles I could not ascertain which one was making that noise. Some time later the female went back to the nest, pecked at it both inside and outside as if to put it in order. The male came near the nest once or twice but I did not see him feeding his mate. A male Blueheaded Rock Thrush which came to the grove was twice chased by the male.

On the 21st morning it rained heavily and continuously for seven hours. In the afternoon it rained again for an hour. When I reached the grove the next morning, there was no nest -- it was lying in a pathetic little heap at the bottom of the tree and there were no broken eggs either. The shrikes were nowhere about. In fact I never saw them again.

## STATISTICS IN ORNITHOLOGY

All too often, quantitative estimates in ornithology are avoided because of the impossibility of counting up or measuring everything even over a limited area. If the area is made too small, the results are likely to be hopelessly wide of the mark, whereas if a reasonably sized area is selected, the physical difficulties prove insurmountable. It is here that observations on a statistical basis prove invaluable, and give the observer a powerful tool for quantitative work.

Suppose the intention is to find out the numbers of birds nesting in a particular area. It is obvious that if the nests on only one or two trees are counted, the results will be valueless. On the other hand, except at the expense of immense labour and effort, it is impossible to count every nest even over a limited area of a few hectares. Even if someone undertook this stupendous task, there could be no guarantee that the odd tree or bush had not been missed out. It is here that statistics comes into its own. I will show how.

In the above example, if the total area is say 10 hectares, it can be split up into 10 rectangles running from one end of the area to the other, each as nearly one hectare in area as possible. Sub-divide each rectangle into strips 10 metres wide, and number the strips consecutively. Suppose the area is 500 metres x 200 metres, then it will have 10 rectangles, each 500 metres x 20 metres. Each rectangle will then have two strips, giving a total of 20 strips, which will be numbered from 1 to 20. Select 5 strips at random (this is most important), from these 20. This is best done by putting 20 numbers in a hat, and drawing out 5. Suppose strips 3, 9, 11, 14, and 18 are drawn. All that has to be done thereafter is to take a walk down the centre of each of these strips, and count the nests visible within 5 metres on either side. It is not necessary to climb trees or peer into thorny bushes inviting scratches, to make sure that no nests have been missed out; though of course the observations otherwise should be as accurate, painstaking and thorough as is possible. From these observations, the number of nests over the entire area can be worked out, as also the percentage of error present in the observation estimated. Incidentally, if two observers carry out this work independently, the percentage of error in each set of observations will show up who is more accurate! I am avoiding the mathematical details, but anyone interested can look them up in any standard work on statistics.

This is not the only field in which statistics can be employed. Rather, there is no field of ornithology in which the application of statistical methods of measurement will not improve our knowledge. I have used it to determine the times of arrival and departure of the migratory Willow Warbler, and to find out the numbers of a particular species present in a given area. An extension of this method was employed for estimating the numbers of different animals found in the Hazaribagh National Park.

Depending on the conditions, a statistical experimental method can always be found out for any type of quantitative measurement that one may have in mind. I will appeal to all fellow ornithologists to devote some time to estimating numbers. As a start, could members from Delhi work out the number of species and the number of birds of each species present on the Najafgarh Jheel? Observations at different times of the year and over a number of years will give an interesting picture of the variations in the avifauna. Any help that I can render in either devising the experiment or analysing the results will be gladly placed at the disposal of members.

Mrs. JAMAL ARA

## SWALLOWS BATHING

On the evening of 27 January I was looking out for waterhen in a tank on the left hand side of the Vile-Parle-Santacruz Subway not far off from Godh-bunder Road. This tank is a wide expanse about 3 to 4 acres in area, choked all over with water hyacinth (Eichhornia crassipes) except for a small area at its northern end and another small patch on the west. Attempts to meet with the waterhen were unsuccessful, but time was well spent in watching swallows (Hirundo rustica) flying all over the tank at random hawking insects, wagtails feeding among the water hyacinth, and a Bluethroat (Eri-thacus svecicus) dodging intrusion.

At 17.30 hours there was a change in the manner of flight of the swallows. The sun was low in the sky (sunset on the 27th was at 18.29 hrs.), and the rays of the setting sun were shining brightly on the open water patch on the west of the tank. The swallows suspended their random flight and were now flying in a circle, in an orderly single file one followed by another, and making to this open patch of water. On reaching it they threw themselves singly on the surface of the water, fluttered their wings for a twinkling of an eye, splashing water all over them in so doing, took off from the water in the direction the whole file was proceeding, and after gaining some height circled back to follow other swallows going in for a dip. This bathing continued until this patch of water was completely enveloped in the falling evening shadows, when the swallows took again to their random fly-hawk flight.

At swallow ringing sessions of the BNHS/WHO we have often expressed how clean swallows are when we found no ticks on them. I now wonder if the pre-roosting bath is a regular feature with these birds which helps to keep them clean. Such bathing was not observed among the wagtails feeding in the tank, which gave up feeding at 17.40 hours and flew in a northerly direction to their roost.

J.S. SERRAO

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## A PLEA FOR THE STUDY OF MIGRATION OF BUTTERFLIES

There was an interesting report by Mrs. Ganguli in the Newsletter (October 1963) about bulbuls in Delhi feeding their young ones with certain common butterflies, with wings and all. There have been reports of butterflies being eaten by birds such as bee-eaters and drongos (Wynter-Blyth, BUTTERFLIES OF THE INDIAN REGION : 52). The fact that the bulbuls were feeding their young ones with the common species like the Plain Tiger or the Danaid Eggfly shows that it is not an accident. It is very likely that butterflies form a regular part of the diet of the young ones, if not the adult birds. Mrs. Ganguli's report is also interesting from the fact that the Plain Tiger is commonly believed to be a species 'distasteful' to its predators and the Danaid Eggfly is said to get protection from the predators because of its striking resemblance to the former species. If the bulbul had taken the Plain Tiger then the bulbul did not mind the taste or on the other hand, if it had been the Danaid Eggfly that was caught, the bulbul had recognised the Eggfly in spite of the mimicry!

Several species of birds have been observed to eat butterflies in migration (C.B. Williams, INSECT MIGRATION:177-178) and we know that the availability of food, plays an important factor in the migration of birds. Very little is known about the migration of insects in India and the study of migration of marked butterflies may prove to be a useful venture, which amateur naturalists can easily undertake.

The author has recently started marking butterflies with paper labels. Each



label has a registration number and the legend 'Inform Christian College, Madras-45' and a record is kept with the date of marking and the name of the species for each marked individual with its registration number. We adopt the method (Williams, INSECT MIGRATION:201) of folding the paper and sticking the label soaked in 'quikfix'. The adhesive soaks through the wing when some pressure is applied and the label is waterproof. The author has chosen two main species, namely the Blue Tiger (Danaus lemnice) and the Common Indian Crow (Euploea core), which are known to be migration (R. Reuben, J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 58:815). These butterflies are tough and easy to catch as they congregate on Crotalaria plants and settle down on flowers.

In other parts of the world marked butterflies have been recovered even at a distance of 850 miles from the place of marking and most butterflies have a life span of several months. Readers of the Newsletter are asked to look for marked butterflies and to start projects of their own. The author shall be equally grateful for bird notes connection with butterflies.

GIFT SIROMONEY  
Madras Christian College, Madras

#### EXTRACTS

Reproduced from The Christian Science Monitor

#### BIRDS CAUGHT IN CAPITAL FIX

Washington: Nearly a dozen horned grebes have crash landed in the capital and its suburbs and there's no telling when they'll leave.

Not such good flyers anyhow, the water birds ran into real trouble when ice clogged their wings. Some came down in landlocked areas, which means double trouble since the birds can take off only from water.

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#### HABITAT OF THE HOUSE SPARROW

The life of the house sparrow is intimately bound up with that of man. . . . In previous chapters we have seen how the species evolved in close association with agricultural man; this evolution has continued <sup>and</sup> in many places the bird has emancipated itself from the agricultural background and is now largely associated with urbanised man. For example, it is interesting to note the E. Coues, writing about the house sparrow in America in 1879, stated that: 'Here they still live for the most part, in cities, towns and villages....' W.B. Barrows, when discussing the spread of the house sparrow in North America, remarked that any birds that were introduced to farms near towns did not stay but moved to the town.

In the United States, the bird spread from town to town along railway lines in box cars and so on and it was not until the towns were fully occupied that a movement took place into suburban and rural areas, especially in grain-growing districts. In the early days of colonisation, farms that were visited by flocks of birds in the autumn to feed on the ripening grain were deserted by the sparrows at other times of the year.

One of the main features of the sparrow's habitat today is the presence of buildings, preferably occupied ones; for the house sparrow will normally only nest in unoccupied buildings if they are close to inhabited ones. In an optimum sparrow habitat the buildings are close together, though there must also be patches of open ground, as occurs in suburbs and cities like London, where there are numbers of parks and squares among the houses. This meets the requirements of a regular supply of food provided by the human inhabitants, together with ground that supplies a certain amount of vegetable food for the adults and insect food for the young. The bird, how-



ever, occurs even in towns where the open spaces are very restricted . . . and they are also to be found in such barren habitats as factory sites and railway stations. . . .

Many of these latter birds appear to spend much of their lives completely under cover. There is an even more extraordinary newspaper report of sparrows nesting in a coal mine in Northumberland in 1956 hundred of feet below the ground where they were fed by miners. From 'The House Sparrow', by D. Summers-Smith. Copyright, 1963, by D. Summers-Smith. Wm. Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., London.

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#### THE RARE KIWI OF NEW ZEALAND NEEDS PROTECTION

Of all the birds which are now in need of protection the kiwi is surely one of the most extraordinary species -- a bird which cannot fly and can hardly see. Although it is the national emblem of its native New Zealand, most New Zealanders have never seen it in its native haunts, on account of its habits. It is a completely nocturnal bird, living well away from human habitation in dense forests. During the daytime it hides away in small caves or under fallen trees, coming out only at night to feed. . . . To make up for its lack of sight, however, it has a very strong bill which is extremely sensitive both to touch and to smell, the two senses on which the bird relies for nearly all its activities.

In earlier times kiwis were very plentiful, but through a variety of causes they have become rather scarce today. They used to be caught in great numbers for food, and of course their inability to fly or to see made them easy victims. The Maoris, too, used kiwi skins as an important part of their ceremonial dress. . . . So the kiwi was faced with extinction, but in good time the New Zealand Government realized the danger, and declared it illegal to kill or to capture kiwis without special permit. . . .

Like the African ostrich, the South American rhea and the Australian emu, the kiwi is a true flightless bird. Its wings have become reduced to mere remnants which are quite useless for any purpose and its feathers look more like rough hair. . . .

The kiwi's breeding habits are no less interesting and unusual than its other activities. Nesting sites are similar to those chosen for sleeping. To begin with only a few twigs are collected, and perhaps a certain amount of excavating may be undertaken. In these preliminary preparations both parents cooperate. The female then lays one egg, which is incredibly large, weighing usually a little under one pound, which is about one-fifth of her own weight. Having achieved this night effort she loses interest and wanders off leaving it to the male to incubate the egg, a long process taking about seventy-five days. During this time he rarely leaves the nest, and consequently gets very little to eat, so that by the time the egg hatches he has lost about a third of his original weight. . . .

How long kiwis live is not known for certain, but it is well over twenty years. Specimens have lived at Hawkes Bay as long as this, and are known to have been several years old when they arrived. . . . The name kiwi is derived from the birds' call, in which the first syllable is long and the second short, -- From 'Vanishing Animals : Preserving Nature's Rarities', by Philip Street. Copyright, 1961, by Philip Street. Faber & Faber, London. E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York, 1963.

## REVIEW

Freeing Flamingos from Anklets of Death. By John G. Williams. Photographs by Alan Root. Appearing in National Geographic Magazine for December 1963.

In September 1962 tens of thousands of flamingo chicks in Lake Magadi in Kenya were in danger of being killed under extraordinary circumstances. The water contained a high concentration of sodium salts and evaporation under the hot African sun gradually built up deadly shackles around the ankles of the young birds. The chain of lakes in East Africa shelter the Lesser Flamingo, Phoeniconaias minor, and its larger cousin Phoenicopterus ruber roseus. Floods in Lake Natron in 1962 drove two million birds to nest in Lake Magadi. This lake has no outlet and the Magadi Soda Co. Ltd. dredges up the crust left after evaporation and turns it into soda ash. It is estimated that 90% of the African Lesser Flamingos lay in this region. The alkaline mudflats where algae and other organisms abound provide food for the birds. Approximately a million birds breed at Lake Natron every year. For the first time on record colonies of Lesser Flamingos were about to nest in Lake Magadi.

Before the last week of August the mating pairs had built their nests of scooped up soda mud. The downies were greyish white with translucent red bills. About 800,000 birds hatched and in 10 to 12 days had left the nest. Some of the late nesters on the fringe of the colony deserted the nests when the mass of the birds moved away. 'One of the most harrowing experiences I have known in my lifetime as an ornithologist was to walk through the belt of deserted nests and hear the piteous piping of several thousand chicks calling for parents who would never return. Vultures by day, and hyaenas by night became angels of mercy to end their sufferings.'

On September 16th a friend reported to the author that something had gone wrong with those chicks. He went over and what he saw appalled him. The chemical concentration at Lake Magadi being much stronger than at the usual nesting place at Lake Natron resulted in the disaster referred to before.

A campaign to save the flamingo chicks was started vigorously, and after a six weeks of effort 27,000 flamingos were manually freed from their soda fetters and another 200,000 were prevented from entering the shallows where concentration was too high.

In 1963 the flamingos fortunately nested in traditional Lake Natron and there were none at Magadi. 'Another great bird rescue has not been needed.'

The photographs by Alan Root are absolutely superb, and readers would do well to see them.

Z.F.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

'FIREARMS FOR SPORTS'

The Bombay Natural History Society has made a strong representation to the Government of India for enacting legislation against the use of air guns for shooting birds by children and irresponsible persons without a proper licence. This has become urgent in view of the air gun factory which is being set up in Chandigarh, and which will ultimately have a production capacity of several thousand air rifles per day.

In all countries there is a constant battle in progress between 'sports-men' and conservationists about the desirability or otherwise of making firearms liberally available. The following letter is reproduced from The

Christian Science Monitor,

'I would like to echo a hearty amen to Sherwood S. Stutz's letter entitled "Men Commit Crimes".

'There are 20 million Americans who use firearms for sports and target practice. These citizens enjoy this type of recreation as one of the basic freedoms of this country.

'For this freedom they pay an excise tax when they purchase these firearms which supports programs of wildlife conservation. Many projects of our United States Forest Service are sponsored through taxes derived from the sale of firearms.

'These 20 million Americans are not the culprits who use firearms in acts of violence. Should they be punished for another's crime?

'We cannot say a firearm is inherently wicked simply because it can be used as an instrument of death. An automobile, bottle, screwdriver, hat-pin, and many other useful items can be used as instruments of death. This does not necessarily mean they should be banned from public use.' James O. Birdine, Burnside, Ky.

If the air guns are ultimately going to be available let us hope that a suitable fee will be charged from every user and that the proceeds will be used for the Conservation of Nature.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Birds of the Keoladeo Ghana, Bharatpur

With reference to Julian Donahue's article on the Keoladeo Ghana in the February Newsletter, could I have seen a Whitebellied Minivet? The bird I saw could have been a female Small Minivet except that its back was much darker than the illustration in Salim Ali's THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, and the dark marking covered the underneck and 'bib' as in the illustration of the male.

I confirm having seen, on the weekend of 27th/29th February 1963, all the duck asterisked by Donahue except the Mallard and the Garganey Teal.

W.D.C. Erskine Crum

13, Aurangzeb Road, New Delhi

/Quite possible that the bird was a Whitebellied Minivet. -- Ed./

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Line-drawings and Sketches

I am a subscriber to the Newsletter for Birdwatchers, and would like to send you a drawing for the cover. Please let me know when you want a line-drawing.

Zia H. Md. Khan,

Anjuman School, Panchgani

/Line-drawings would always be welcome. Send a few samples of your work.

---- Ed./

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Possibilities of ringing Waders and Ducks in Bihar

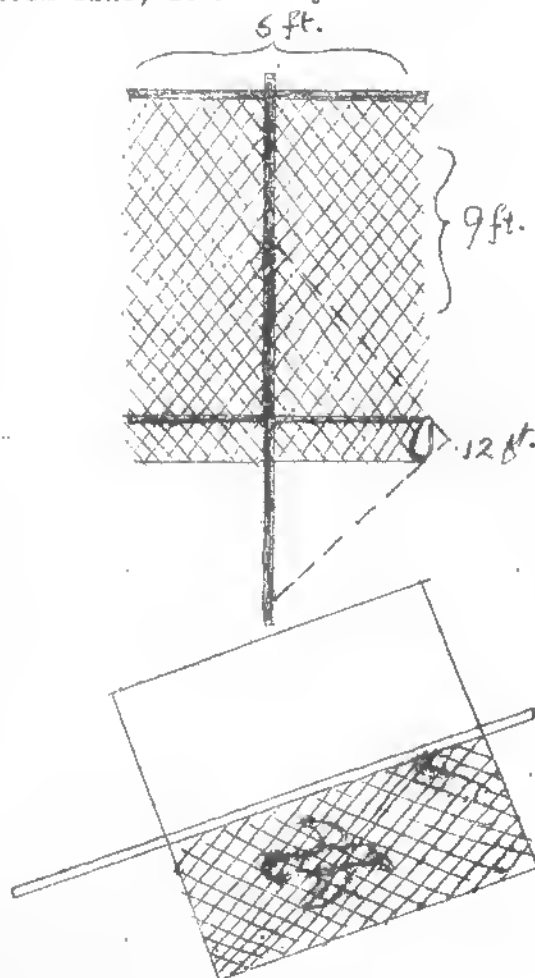
Extracts from a letter dated 17 February 1964 from Mr. P.V. George, at present investigating the possibilities of ringing waders and ducks in Bihar, to Dr. Salim Ali:

'..... Another striking sight was the Openbilled Storks in hundreds. I didn't see any Painted ones among them. During evening they were noted flying at an height of 3 to 4 hundred ft. to north probably to their roost. In their flight no order was observed like 'A' or 'M'. I was first attracted by the humming sound (very similar to the one produced by a colony of bees while they change their places) produced by the flocks flying to their rightly quarters. Most of these birds leave the feeding grounds before sunset. In the feeding ground they were seen concentrating to certain portions and not scattered all over the area.

'Wagtails are noted roosting in sugar cane in thousands. Acrocephalus arundinaceus or Phoenicurus ochruros are the other migrants common all around.

'Here I understood two types of birdcatchers are present, namely the Mirshikar and the Malla. The long nets and the loops which I mentioned in my last letter are used by the Mallawalas who catch only pure waterbirds -- teals, ducks, coots, etc., no waders. Mirshikars who supply the birds for ringing use another type of net by which they can catch any waterbirds. With these people I spent one night. We started after sunset, reached the spot at about 9 and the hunting continued till 1 a.m.

'The 9 ft. x 6 ft. net (1½ inch mesh size) is loosely fastened on two cross planks fixed on a main pole (12 ft.). One hunting party consists of two men. The man who does the catching goes in front with this net in one hand, and a lighted bundle of dry grass in another. The second man follows the catcher close behind beating a metal plate continuously and carrying a basket for collection. I had the good luck to follow this second man. When the catcher sees a bird within 20 to 22 ft., he dashes the pole with the net over the bird. The bird thus caught under the net tries to spring up. Soon the catcher gets hold of it from outside the net and slowly removes it into the basket. I saw him catch Anas clypeata, A. querquedula, A. crecca, Tringa glareola, Capella sp., and Pluvialis dominica, with this net. These Mirshikaris say they can bag any bird (waterbird or wader) by this net. They never go beyond knee-deep water for catching. They do not go for hunting on windy nights as well as moonlit nights.'



P.V. George  
The Subdivisional Officer  
Waterways, Majhoul, Monghyr Dist., Bihar

Keel and Crows

Reference Miss Miriam D. Brown's letter in the February issue of the Newsletter, the following extract from page 395 of THE NESTS AND EGGS OF INDIAN BIRDS, by Allan O. Hume, Vol. II, 2nd edition (1890) may be of interest to our readers.

"On the 8th July I saw two Crows pursuing a male Coel, and after a long chase the Coel dashed into a low bush, from which the Crows drove it into a thick euphorbia hedge; they then attacked it vigorously, and the bird was so frightened that I dismounted from my horse and caught it in my hand. The following day a beautiful female specimen was mobbed to death by Crows in the compound next to mine, and brought to me by the men who saw it killed. . . ."

The extract is from a communication by Col. A.E. Butler to A.O.Hume, and refers to observations the former made in the neighbourhood of Deesa (in Gujarat) in 1876.

It is the only recorded incident in literature I have come across on 'drastic punishment' meted out to keels imposing upon crows.

J.S. Serrao

c/o Bombay Natural Hist. Soc., Bombay

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Ban on the shooting of Migratory Birds

I recently saw an announcement in the Press that the Wild Life Preservation Board had recommended that those States who had not done so should ban the shooting of migratory birds, as due to excessive shooting their numbers had been greatly reduced. Assuming the report to be correct I think members would be interested to hear whether a proper survey was carried out and I think it would be interesting to hear the views of those members who are in a position to give one?

I have not noticed any shortage myself nor have I heard any complaints from others. This season in this locality Pintail Duck and Common Pheasant seen particularly plentiful and the remainder in usual numbers.

Even if numbers were reduced it is difficult to believe that shooting is the main cause as for the last 20 years cartridges have been difficult to obtain and extremely costly.

G.V.R. Frend,

Chikmagalur, Mysore State

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Tickell's Blue Flycatcher feeding on crawling prey

For over 20 minutes on February 16 a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Muscicapa tickelliae allowed me to watch its feeding upon crawling prey. This was on the road to Kuberi Caves, a couple of yards away from where Jarey Colony road meets the road leading to the Caves; time 8.30 a.m.

I saw the flycatcher fly out of the vegetation and perch on a bamboo clump in an open spot. It now started scanning the ground below intently, slowly moving its head from side to side, peering down on the ground with its left eye as the head moved to the right, and with the right as the head moved left; while doing so it occasionally flicked its tail. On pinpointing a crawling prey it flew down to the ground, picked it up and ate it, and flew back either to the original perch, or to another bough of a tree opposite to it, whence to repeat the action all over again. On one occasion after descending to the ground it was noticed to pick up and fling aside a couple of dry leaves apparently in an attempt to uncover a dodging victim. This feeding habit of the bird may be of interest as its recorded food-getting manner is said to be sallying after flying insects, though its redbreasted kin (M. parva) is credited with both.

J.S. Serrao

Zafar Futehally,  
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers

# NEWSLETTER

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## FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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Volume 4-1964 April



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## BIRD NOTES FROM CAPE COMORIN, SOUTH INDIA

The Newsletter has not as yet, I think, had any contribution from a bird-watcher on India's south coast, so, as I am at present on holiday at Cape Comorin, it seems the moment to write one.

This is not my first holiday here and each one seems to be memorable for the bird or birds which have been the special interest of that particular year. This year it is a Kestrel which sits each day at sunrise on the wall east of our compound and an Eastern Peregrine Falcon which suns itself of a morning on a large rock out at sea just off the point half a mile west of us. On a former visit a White-eyed Buzzard-Eagle challenged a Kestrel for the rights of our boundaries. On another holiday an Osprey frequented the western rock, sometimes giving a spectacular fishing display in the evening.

Another happy feature of the place are the 'regulars'. Among these are the Yellow-wattled Lapwing which are unfailingly to be found on the bare grassy compound of one of the traveller's bungalows. There are also the pair of Stone Curlew which are here each year, resting in the daytime under the thorn bushes of a small enclosed field behind our house. There is always a thrill in returning and waking on a moonlight night to hear them and the lapwing with, in its season, the persistent Common Hawk-Cuckoo, calling round the house.

There is also the pleasure of being able to take a new cover to the fort at Vattakottai a few miles along the coast. There, if there is water in the muddy channel that empties itself into the sea just north of the fort, it is pretty certainly possible to effect an introduction with the Blackcapped Kingfisher. This is the only place that I, who normally live inland in Tirunelveli District, about thirty miles away, have found it.

Down among the rocks along the seashore the Common Sandpiper and the Pied

Wagtail can be met at any time of the year. Now, in mid-March, a flock of from twenty to thirty Turnstone work industriously over the rocks each day, and by August 16th I have seen them back from their nesting grounds and still in breeding plumage. A Reef Heron which flies over from the salt pans further west is at present a daily fisher along this beat.

During the south-west monsoon, if one faces the strong wind and the blowing sand, there is the excitement of the presence of the Tern. A good-sized colony of the Ternlet seems to take up residence yearly on the sand dunes near this house. A last pair were still there in August 1961 and I found their nest with two eggs on the 20th of that month. The same day a pair of Ceylon Kentish Plover were about with their two chicks.

In January 1960 I visited the local salt pans with a friend whose acquaintance I had made eighteen months previously on an estuary in Northern Ireland. Not the least enjoyable part of our visit to the salt pans was meeting with many small waders already familiar to us both in Ireland. This whole Cape (Kanyakumari) area is also an ideal place for seeing many of the more common birds of our south Indian plains.

Margaret E. Wilkinson  
Dohnavur, Tirunelveli District

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#### ROUND THE CLOCK VIGIL AT A CORAL TREE

Within our school compound of St. Xavier's, Bombay, there stands a Coral tree. Round the middle of February every year it sheds its leaves; but before long the new trifoliate leaves make their appearance again. Just now at the time of writing, the end of February, the tree is in full bloom with its scarlet flowers in a spate of glory.

The boys and the members of the staff have noticed the unusual beauty of this Coral tree. I have observed many of them watching the tree, looking up at it from the ground; others go up to the first or second floor of the school building to get a closer and better view from the windows. I am often pelted with a barrage of questions about this gorgeous Coral when in bloom year after year, as the students come to my office on business. No, I'm not annoyed but intrigued at the keen interest they show in nature study: 'How many kinds of birds come to the flowers? From where do they come? Where do they go?' and similar questions.

During the last three or four years I have been watching this Coral tree myself with particular interest. I have counted from 20 to 22 varieties of birds visiting it; and I rather fancy that this fact is an extraordinarily surprising number, considering that a school locality like ours is a rather noisy, well populated and pretty distant situation from the free, open country where you would expect such a huge variety of birds.

Now two sets of birds come to our tree. The first set include the permanent residents of the locality. Some of these we have grown accustomed to consider almost as part of our institution, since they are born within the school compound or building, or in the neighbouring grounds. They spend the whole of their lives in the school compound, and I presume they end their days somewhere on the same grounds.

Very conspicuous among other crows, there is one particular crow which has a certain number of white feathers. It has certainly come under my observation for more than 10 or 12 years. Another crow, that has the upper part of its beak broken, has been constantly under my purview for quite a number of years. Two or three pairs of common kites for many years have been seen by me on the same tree, nesting on the same spots and I even know where they actually roost. As for the parakeets I can say pretty much the same thing.



Year after year a pair of Tailor birds nest in the very same spot and they can be seen throughout the year darting about our compounds. It goes without saying that the same can be said about the sparrows and pigeons here which, judging from their numbers and the noise they are pleased to make for our entertainment, seem to find our area a congenial habitation.

The second set of birds are only seen at this particular time of the year when the Coral trees are in full bloom, except for the Rosy Pastors that are real migrants and the Golden Orioles that are partially migrant. The rest of them can be seen throughout the year in the suburbs of Bombay. They are attracted by and follow the noisy flights of Rosy Pastors and Greyheaded Mynas so that they settle where the red flowers can be seen.

I hereby append a list of birds that I have observed in the Coral tree of our compound during its flowering season:

Permanent Residents

1. Common Crow
2. Jungle Crow
3. Common Myna
4. Sparrows
5. Parakeets
6. Purplerumped Sunbird
7. Tailor Birds

Note: Permanent residents such as the Common Kite and the Rock Pigeon do not go to the flowers.

Annual visitors

8. Rosy Pastors
9. Greyheaded Myna
10. Redvented Bulbul
11. Redwhiskered Bulbul
12. Whitebrowed Bulbul
13. Golden Oriole
14. Blackheaded Oriole
15. Fantailed Flycatcher
16. Magpie Robin
17. King Crow
18. Coppersmith
19. Whitebreasted Kingfisher
20. Whitethroated Munias
21. Blyth's Reed Warbler

The Orioles and Blyth's Reed Warblers can be seen throughout the winter season. The Coppersmith stays within our compound until the breeding season is over.

Early in the morning before sunrise, the crows and the parakeets are the first visitors to the scarlet Coral flowers. By 7 to 7.30 a.m., when the golden rays of the morning sun have brightened up the world, flocks of noisy Greyheaded Mynas and Rosy Pastors come to fill their cheery beaks with the nectar from the flowers. By 8.00 a.m. until noon — this is the time when a larger variety of birds congregates at the Coral tree — you may see some of them drinking in the nectar from the flower bowls; some others are collecting the tiny insects around the flowers. This is the time when there is much more life and traffic from one flower bowl to another to the accompaniment of a riot of colour and song, and the occasional strident quarrels among the feathery denizens are so well blended and harmonised as to afford the observer a sight and treat beyond wearying.

Then all of a sudden a strange noise comes from somewhere and instantly the orchestral warbling and screeching and cawing dies down to silence for a moment. It might be the report of a bang of school window or the moaning of the siren from the near-by Industrial school. Then activities resume again as before. At other times the whole flock disperses in small groups to some other Coral trees at no considerable distance from here, and so da capo (= to repeat again), they return to our Coral tree to carry on.

Round about noon the Coral is practically deserted, except for a small group of insectivorous birds. The Rosy Pastors and the Greyheaded Mynas can be heard singing to their delight among the shady branches of near-by trees, with occasional fleeting visits to the Coral flowers.

By about 4.00 p.m. that part of our school ground where the Coral tree stands is shadowed in sombre shadows by the school building. No birds now visit the Coral, barring the sparrows, crows, and parrots, and the whole scenery recedes into the silence of the evening. Yet even of a late evening a few small groups of Rosy Pastors and Greyheaded Mynas still make short visits to the Coral as if unable to say good-night!

Note: The Greyheaded Mynas every year come almost a week ahead of the Rosy Pastors. As regards the Jungle Crows, more of them can be seen at the flowers even when the percentage of Common Crows is much larger. On some occasions I counter up to 8 Jungle Crows at a time when there were just a couple of Common Crows.

My first flock of Greyheaded Mynas arrive on the 26th of January and the presence of Rosy Pastors was observed on the trees on 20th of February. From the 2nd of March only small groups of Rosy Pastors could be seen at the flowers. Three days later the Rosy Pastors could not be seen any more.

By 7.00 p.m., when dusk has already fallen, the fruit-eating bats come to the Coral tree and carry on with their feeding up to 9.00 p.m. The two most common fruit-bats in Bombay, which can be seen together, are the Flying Fox and the Shortnosed Fruit Bat. Any by way of exception or accident, a few Fulvous fruit bats may be observed.

By 10.00 p.m. the bats would seem to have abandoned the Coral, but throughout the night there are always some isolated visitors. Yet I have noticed that much before sunrise, when the day is quite young, there is again a short period of great activity, but with a difference. Only Flying Foxes can then be observed at the flowers. Then follows a brief period of calm, but not for long. For by 6.00 a.m. the same old crows and parakeets are punctually on the spot making merry.

A. Navarro, S.J.

St. Xavier's High School, Bombay 1.

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#### BINOCULARS : SELECTION OF A SUITABLE TYPE

The only expensive item in your birdwatching equipment is a pair of good binoculars and it is a pity that so many take considerable trouble in procuring a pair not at all suitable for their purpose.

Binoculars are either Gallilien or prismatic. The former have many disadvantages and are nowadays sold mostly in toy shops, for the amusement of children. A few opera glasses may be of this type. Otherwise, prismatic binoculars in various sizes are manufactured for all serious users.

SIZE: It will be noticed that binoculars are marked 6 x 30, 7 x 35, 7 x 50, 20 x 50, etc. The first number denotes the magnification and the second number the diameter of the object glass in millimetres. Thus 7 x 50 denotes that the magnification is seven times and the diameter of the object glass is 50 millimetres.

MAGNIFICATION: A magnification of 7 x means that the object seen by the viewer is brought seven times closer to the viewer or in other words the dimensions of the object are increased seven times each way. That also means that an object which is wide enough to occupy a field of view of one degree appears to occupy about seven degrees through the binoculars. Therefore, the larger the magnification the smaller the actual field of view. In fact, binoculars with a magnification of 20 x have such a small field of view that a bird cannot be spotted, and the instrument is unsuited to our purpose.

Not only the object under view, but vibrations and hand shake are also proportionately magnified. When the magnification exceeds 9 x, it will be necessary to rest the elbows to prevent the binoculars from shaking. Since, this may not be possible when looking up into trees, a higher magnification than 9 x should be avoided.

Thirdly, when an object is magnified 6 times in breadth and 6 times in height, it becomes 36 times duller or dimmer. Similarly with a magnification of 7 x it becomes 49 times duller and with a magnification of 20 x it becomes actually 400 times duller. Something will have to be done to compensate this!

OBJECT GLASS: The light gathering power of the object glass is dependent on its area. The object glass being circular, its area is in proportion to the square of the diameter. Therefore, an object glass of 50 mm. will gather four times more light than one of 25 mm. If the pupil of your eye is 3 mm. in diameter and your binoculars have 30 mm. object glasses, the glasses being 10 times more in diameter will be 100 times more in area and will gather 100 times more light than your naked eye. This more than compensates for the image becoming 36 times or 49 times duller.

Therefore, the larger object glasses give you a much brighter image but the binoculars become larger, heavier and more expensive.

SELECTION: Any magnification below five or above nine is unsuitable. This leaves only three usual types to choose from, 6 x 30, 7 x 35, or 7 x 50. The first is the lightest and the least expensive and is excellent for all daylight use. The second has slightly more magnification but the same brightness as the first. The last has the same magnification as the second but is twice as bright. It is excellent for use in failing light and even at night. The satisfaction that it is bound to give may compensate the buyer for the extra weight and cost.

FOCUSSING: Modern binoculars have a centre focussing screw. In addition, the right eye-piece can be screwed in and out. The binoculars should first be adjusted to suit the width between your eyes. They should then be extended to the maximum extent by the centre focussing screw and also by screwing out the right eye-piece. The right eye is now closed and the object is brought into focus by manipulating the centre focussing screw. Next the left eye is closed and the right eye-piece screwed in till the object comes into bright focus. Both eyes can now be opened. Objects at different distances can now be viewed by manipulating the centre focussing screw without touching the eye-piece.

Unless this procedure is followed, the binoculars will not be satisfactory. Your eyes may try to compensate for errors in focussing and the strain may result in headache or dizziness.

Binoculars will automatically correct eye defects like short sight and long sight but not astigmatism. If you suffer from severe astigmatism, you will have to use your binoculars on top of your existing glasses. Care will have to be taken to get a comfortable pair.

S. V. Nilakanta

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THE GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER IN NORTH SAURASHTRA,  
GUJARAT

I was at Dhrangadhra and having tea with the Maharaja of Dhrangadhra on the evening of the 25th February 1964 in the palace garden. A Goldenbacked Woodpecker flew over us and alighted on a tall tree beyond. Four of us at the party got up and followed the bird with binoculars and watched it. It also emitted its staccato screams and I saw that it was a male bird in good plumage. Mr. G.C. Jain who was with us, and who has a Goldenbacked Woodpecker in his aviary, became rather anxious thinking that his bird may have escaped but I was quite sure it was not his, and it was not. Dhrangadhra is out of the main forest area where this woodpecker occurs, and it was strange to find it there. In fact there are no regular forest areas nearby so I am inclined to think that this species migrates (or strays? - Ed.) beyond its natural habitat sometimes..

R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji  
Zil Bahar, Bhavnagar.

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THE GREEN BARBET (MEGALAIMA VIRIDIS)

Extracts from a letter written to me by Shri T.V. Jose, Bombay, on my note in the Newsletter Vol. 4, No.3 are given below:

"The conclusions you seemed to be arriving at . . . appear a little strange. The fact that the Barbet was seen going into the hole at 6.45 p.m. is not conclusive proof that the bird makes use of the hole as a roost, for (1) barbets are found active even at night and they do not make as much difference between day and night as many other species of birds do, and it is likely that the bird seen going in at 6.45 p.m. might have left the hole after the fall of dusk. (2) Barbets have a habit of visiting old nests (holes) after the breeding season, and that too . . . in the afternoon and later, after the day's meal. Such instances as noted by you may be a mere prank lasting up to 6.45 p.m. or much later. (3) Barbets are now about to breed and therefore it is possible that they were looking for nests. What you saw might have been a struggle for possession. (4) The number of holes is not found to be as large as that of the birds themselves, and, therefore, holes can only be used by a privileged few. The rest would require some other arrangement. Such dualism in roosting habits is further to be doubted. (5) Visits to the hole as you say are not observed throughout the year; if it roosts it be, it should have been in continuous use throughout the year..."

Before discussing the interesting points raised by Shri Jose, I should like to say that the hole in question appears now to be a nest. From the 25th of February a barbet has been noticed spending much of the daytime in the hole. It is often found peeping out of the hole for some minutes; at other times it is completely hidden inside the hole or sitting on a branch nearby, busy preening.

On the 12th, as mentioned in my previous note, one bird pulled another out of the hole and took its place. On the 17th a barbet entered the hole at 6.34 p.m., and at 6.40 it came out and sat on a branch close to the hole. Another barbet flew at it and drove it off. Both birds flew off. At 6.45 one returned and went into the hole. On the 18th and 23rd at 6.45 there was already one bird inside the hole; when the other arrived, the one inside the hole just hopped out quietly and allowed the other to take its place. On the 25th, however, at 6.37 one bird came, pulled out the occupant and took its place. The behaviour of the birds till that date was not much different from that of birds quarrelling over a roost hole. Such behaviour I had studied fairly closely for a long time at Chittur.

Now, however, the presence of one bird in the hole during the day and its habit of sitting for long periods with its head out, suggest that the hole is being used as a nest. I can only conclude that there is a close resemblance between the behaviour patterns of birds quarrelling over a roost hole and those engaged in starting a nest. One important difference noticed was that, while rival claimants to a roost invariably uttered a kwo-kwo-kwo note combined with a churring note, the birds to which my note refers did not utter such notes even when they seemed to be having a tug-of-war at the hole.

Shri T.V. Jose believes that barbets are not purely diurnal. My experience makes me think that the barbet is not only purely diurnal, but that it retires to roost long before the Drongo and the Magpie Robin do. Dr. Sálim Ali writes (BIRDS OF TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN) that the barbet sometimes calls on moonlit nights. I have not so far heard the voice of the barbet at night, that does not prove that it is active at night. I have heard the Crow-Pheasant calling at midnight; yesterday (14.3.1964) a Magpie Robin uttered a few bars of song repeatedly at about 1 a.m. This does not make the Crow-Pheasant or the Magpie Robin a nocturnal bird or suggest that these birds do not roost. It would be interesting to hear from other readers of the Newsletter on this subject.

Shri Jose suggests that the disparity between the number of holes and barbets in a particular area indicates that all barbets cannot be roosting in holes. I am afraid that this argument won't hold; for while we may be able to hazard a guess at the number of barbets in a locality, we can never be sure that we know how many hollows and tunnels there are in the trees to serve as roosts. Where a barbet fails to find a hole large enough to accommodate it, it will sit in a depression in a jagged stump. I know of one such bird at Chittur. It had failed in its attempts to take possession of another barbet's sleeping place and had chosen to spend the nights in this inadequate cavity. I used to see this bird in the roost at 8, 9, and 10 p.m. and have a flash-light photograph of it too. It is well known that woodpeckers roost in holes; but, how many of us who are very familiar with woodpeckers can claim to have seen one going to roost?

I am glad that the publication of my premature conclusions about the barbets seen this season led to my discovery of yet another birdwatcher who hails from Kerala!

K.K. Neelakantan

[Dr. Sálim Ali confirms that we have no evidence that barbets are at all nocturnal, and much evidence that they are purely diurnal. Calling sometimes during night is no criterion as pointed out by Prof. Neelakantan; many of the cuckoos also do so, and commonly, during the breeding season. — Ed.]

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#### REVIEW

PHEASANTS AND THEIR ENEMIES. By James O'C. Fitzsimons. Illustrated by Jennifer Fitzsimons. pp. xi+96. London 1963. Macdonald & Evans Ltd. Price 15s.

This small book deals succinctly and interestingly with fortyfour species of pheasants both common and rare. The author has been an enthusiastic breeder of pheasants and known these birds intimately. There are many drawings by his daughter of these birds as well as of their predators. ". . . The whole work makes instructive reading both for the beginner and the expert alike and it should provide a textbook that no one who is interested in pheasants should be without."

Apparently pheasants are as easy to keep as domestic poultry and cost less to feed. They are able to look after themselves from the day that they leave the egg and can provide a good deal of pleasure to the keepers. The author writes that since pheasants are essentially ground birds it is not cruel to confine them to a cage. They always prefer to walk than to fly anyway. In fact some birds which escaped seem to have realised very soon that they had made a mistake and made every effort to get back into the aviaries quickly. If birds have to be kept in cages, let us keep only birds like pheasants and budgerigars behind bars, who do not seem to miss their loss of freedom. But however, at home the birds feel in the aviary it is doubtful whether their courtship displays are as spectacular inside as outside the cage. In the paragraphs describing behaviour ~~xxx~~ in the wild the author gives this interesting account:

'Behaviour in the wild:

'In winter male and female pheasants segregate and remain in flocks until mid March. Like all birds, especially migrants, the male pheasant arrives first in early spring and selects the breeding territory. Daylight hours are increasing and more food can be obtained. With better feeding they put on weight, get fitter and reproduction is stimulated. The mating call then starts with a whirring of wings and a dance. Wing flapping is the reverse to that of the domestic fowl, the male of which flaps his wings first and crows afterwards; the pheasant crows first and then flaps his wings. This performance attracts the females who begin to gather around. If they like the terrain and the male they will stay; if not, they wander farther until they find more congenial surroundings.

'Up to this time the male will have slowly wandered along, stepping steadily and gracefully, but in April, after many fights with other males, he becomes attached to from five to ten females. The vanquished males, usually the very old, or very young, late hatched from the previous season, must remain celibate. The victor now assumes a more stately stance and with a defiant look, he struts around in a majestic manner. The cere and face become bright crimson; the crest feathers stand erect and the ears protrude. The call now becomes more frequent and is answered by the chosen females, who, like all wild birds, will only answer the call of their own mate. Display and courtship now starts; the wing next to the female drops, the head is bowed; the tail spread. The female seems completely bored and keeps on picking; she eventually stops and mating takes place. Coming on to the end of April and beginning of May, laying and hatching are in full swing and from then onwards the male takes no more interest in the proceedings. He takes no part in incubating or rearing.'

(Z.F.)

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

LIFE Magazine is bringing out a book entitled TROPICAL ASIA (SOUTH EAST ASIA, ORIENT REGION) in the series of zoological-geographical books for Life Nature Library. The text will be by Dr. S. Dillon Ripley.

Efforts are being made by the publishers to get suitable photographs of animals and birds, preferably in their natural habitats. Search is being made for photographs of the following birds:

Pheasants, blue-eared pheasant, monal pheasant, etc., bee-eaters, sarus crane, rollers, cuckoos, parakeets, ibis, sun-grebe, jacana, trogon, barbet, pigeons, doves, goatsuckers, kingfishers, peacock, junglefowl, pitta, broadbill, bulbul, sunbirds, wood swallows, flowerpecker, cuckoo-shrike, pigmy owl, fishing owl, cormorant, chukar, partridge.

Will those of our readers who have suitable material kindly contact

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## CORRESPONDENCE

A Tip to Birdwatchers

With reference to Mrs. Ganguli's note on the Baybacked Shrike at Kasauli in the issue for March 1964, I see that she suggests (in the last paragraph on p. 3) that the nestling reached the bush when still blind. To me this seems inconceivable, and it is perhaps not actually what she means. The Baybacked, like all our other shrikes, is born naked and blind, but as far as I know (my notes are not very explicit on this point) the eyes open on the 3rd or 4th day (or maybe the 5th ?) while there is, as yet, only a very sparse and straggly covering of down on the head and back of the nestling and the quills are just beginning to sprout. In the ordinary course the fluffy-plumaged chick with stumpy wings and stub tail only leaves the nest on the 13th or 14th day, but it may do so a day or 2 earlier if much disturbed. The fledgling is non-flying at the time, but capable of making short wobbly hops. Anyhow, its eyes are surely as wide open then as they are ever likely to be! Could it not be that the youngster (ignoring the 'yet unopened eyes') which Mrs. Ganguli saw being fed in the bush was actually from some other nest, and that the nest of 7th June which she found damaged and empty on the 10th had in fact suffered a disaster to its contents?

May I here suggest that it will be fulfilling one of the important purposes of the Newsletter if readers will read all the notes critically and seek clarification on, or correct, any seeming misconceptions, inconsistencies and errors that may catch their eye? Only thus can they help to prevent inaccuracies from being handed down and repeated. A great many such have crept into published Indian bird literature and been (forgivably -- considering the eminence of some of the perpetrators) copied from book to book, simply because statements were accepted at the face value by contemporary readers, or because of undue sanctity attached to the printed word, or because readers did not wish to seem presumptuous by questioning the assertion of a 'Master' or casting doubt on his identification!

Salim Ali

33 Pali Hill, Bandra,  
Bombay 50

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News from Mr. Jasper Newsome

I am rather neglecting my birds at the moment, particularly the paper-work. I haven't really been in the field much either, but for a glorious three weeks in North Africa in December. Starlings and other early breeders, Roos for example are nesting already and most resident members of the thrush-complex are singing well. We have had a mild winter with virtually no snow, none at all that settled, though in the northern countries they have. This is good, since an enormous proportion of our resident species died last winter. Now they have had a chance to recover and there will be a generally good breeding season.

Thank you for the Newsletter which is a great source of joy to me. I also receive Pavo, albeit only twice so far, and by sea mail, but it has a great future, I am sure. It arrives addressed to Dr. Newsome! I must rectify this.

Jasper Newsome  
Oxford, England

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Pugnacious behaviour of breeding Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher

I was interested to read Mrs. Ganguli's observation (Newsletter for March 1964) on the pugnacious nature of breeding Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatchers.

Some years ago, when I was the happy owner with a bungalow and garden at Cumballa Hill, Bombay, I have often observed these birds diving to attack intruding crows, who dared to approach their nests among the mangrove trees. That would be in July or August.

Similarly I have observed magpie robins dive repeatedly to attack a snake that had swallowed their chick. We killed the marauder and recovered the chick from its inside. It was whole, but dead.

Amin Tyabji

Bombay

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Zafar Futehally  
Editor: Newsletter for Birdwatchers  
32A, Juhu Lane, Andheri  
Bombay 58



# NEWSLETTER

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## FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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Volume 4-1964 May



NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 5

May 1964

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RECAPTURES OF BIRDS RINGED UNDER THE  
BNHS/WHO BIRD STUDY PROJECT IN INDIA  
AND PAKISTAN

From time to time the Newsletter has published reports of recoveries of birds ringed recently under the BNHS/WHO Migration Study Project. Apart from the recoveries from beyond Indo-Pakistani limits, which are significant for the clues they furnish as regards the prevalence of some of the species and the routes they follow on migration, there have been a number of very interesting recoveries within the country itself which are no less significant as pointers to problems connected with local bird movements.

A few of the more outstanding of these 'local' recoveries are given below:

1. A Yellowheaded Wagtail (Motacilla citreola, No. A-15897) ringed in Bharatpur 4.10.1962; recovered in Kerala 13.1.1964. This is particularly interesting as the bird was ringed as well as recaptured by our own field teams at both points who at the time of ringing were saying how wonderful it would be if some of the birds they were ringing in the north were recaptured by themselves in the south!

2. A Greyheaded Wagtail (Motacilla flava ?thunbergi, No. 38994) ringed at Salt Lakes, Calcutta city environs 27.5.1963

(presumably shortly before rather belated emigration); recovered in Kerala, 29.11.1963, suggesting that some at least of the visitors of this species to south India may belong to the North Siberian population presumably using the postulated eastern migration route down the Brahmaputra Valley. Unfortunately the ringer had to put a query before thunbergi leaving the race in doubt and thus partially vitiating the value of this otherwise eloquent record.

3. A Blueheaded Wagtail (Motacilla flava beema, No.A-19452) ringed in Kerala 20.12.1962; recovered 10.9.1963 at Sakhi, West Pakistan, represents a bird evidently returning to its south Indian winter quarters by the NW. route along which, it will be recalled, two other Kerala-ringed examples of this species and race have already been recovered -- at Bannu (NW. Frontier Province of W. Pakistan) and Kabul (Afghanistan) respectively.

4. Another M.f. beema (No. AB-5531) ringed in Kerala, 18.2.1963, recovered at Erode (11° 21' N. x 77° 43' E.) in Coimbatore district, Madras State 13.12.1963 suggests a bird returning to its winter quarters after spending summer in its breeding range presumably by the NW. Pakistan and Afghanistan route as in the previous cases.

That migratory birds may be as 'true' to their winter quarters as to their breeding haunts has already been demonstrated by a ringed Grey Wagtail (M. caspica) which returned punctually in September for 5 years running to the same small garden lawn in a Bombay suburb (J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 47:161) and by ringed Orphean Warblers (Sylvia hortensis jerdoni) and a hoopoe (Upupa epops) to the same acre or two of scrub jungle at Hingol-gadh in Saurashtra in subsequent autumns, in one case for three years in succession.

5. More recently a Common Teal (Anas crecca, No. F.3505) ringed on 6.2.1964 in the Monghyr District of Bihar was shot about 5 weeks later, on 15.3.1964, near Srinagar in Kashmir, about 1400 km. W. NW. of the ringing place, a rather unexpected direction for a duck wintering so far east to take.

6. A Black Partridge (Francolinus francolinus, No.C-654) ringed at Chaduva in Kutch on 18.3.1961 was shot by H.H. The Maharao in the same area on 6.1.1964 confirming the belief that such non-migratory birds are largely sedentary and parochial. On the other hand a Little Brown Dove (Streptopelia senegalensis, No. B-1069) normally considered sedentary, ringed at the same place in Kutch on 15.3.1961 had travelled about 200 km. north of the ringing place when killed near Hyderabad, Sind, in West Pakistan on 27.2.1964. This implies a crossing of the Great Rann of Kutch. Doves of different species have been reported as local migrants in some areas, but details of these movements are completely unknown. This is perhaps the first definite proof of such a movement obtained in India and suggests the possibility that, if critically examined, some of our birds in winter may turn out to be immigrants of the form ermanni which breeds in Afghanistan and Turkestan.

Besides these we have numerous recaptures, particularly of ringed wagtails at the same roost in Kerala where they were ringed several weeks to several months before. It is observed from these recoveries that by far the greatest number is of birds ringed up to a year before. At present it seems difficult to interpret the more or less complete absence in the recaptures of birds ringed longer than that period, but we must hope that more leading data will soon become available.

## BIRD RINGING IN KERALA

Edanad this year presented a different face with crops of sweet potatoes in fields where sugarcane was grown last year and vice versa. We started work on the 26th November 1963 and in 64 days of netting caught and ringed 21,920 birds, from the following species.

<u>Hirundo rustica</u>	..	39
<u>Motacilla indica</u>	..	1224
<u>Motacilla flava thunbergi</u>		7377
<u>Motacilla flava beema</u>	..	5927
<u>Motacilla flava melanogrisea</u>		23
<u>Motacilla flava simillima</u>	?	240
<u>Motacilla flava ssp.</u>	..	5296
<u>Motacilla citreola</u>	..	1722
<u>Motacilla caspica</u>	..	3
<u>Motacilla alba dukhunensis</u>		69.

Within these 64 days of netting, 441 birds ringed earlier were recaptured, all, but two, of which were ringed in Kerala. These recaptures were in the proportion presented below:

Years of ringing	Wagtails ringed each season	Wagtails recaptured between 26.xi.63 and 5.ii.1964
1961 Nov.-1962 Jan.	1900	8
1962 Mar.	4066	25
1962 Dec.-1963 Feb.	20,369	158
1963 Nov.-1964 Feb.	21,821	250

The two other recoveries were of a Greyheaded Yellow Wagtail ringed in 24-Parganas District, West Bengal, on 27 May 1963 and recovered at Edanad on 29 November 1963; and a Yellowheaded Wagtail ringed at Bharatpur in October 1962 and recovered at Mangalam, Edanad on 13 January 1964.

On an average mortality of birds either before or after ringing remained at 1.5 percent throughout the duration of the camp, except on a solitary instance of 2.7%.

Till the first week of January 11 ticks were taken out, but none after this date. In all 21,728 birds were examined by Messrs Periasamy and Jamshed Panday. Shri Jamshed Panday collected some 450 blood smears from the ringed birds, for study by the Russian scientists for antibodies.

Two members of the Society's research staff were present at the camp throughout. Shri Jamshed Panday reached the camp on 9th December and took a very active part in almost every department of work. A batch of local volunteers led by Shri Oommen helped the team whenever there was a shortage of hands. Unlike those of 1963, the wagtails of this season did not concentrate in Edanad alone all the while. From the last week of December the number of wagtails in Edanad dropped considerably, and from the 7th of January the team switched over to a new roost at Mangalam about a mile west of Edanad. This new roost (sugarcane plantation) was in the midst of vast fertile fields holding crops of paddy, tapioca, and snake-gourd (padval). The plantations are guarded carefully and the wagtails could roost here free from disturbance. The team worked in two units, each leaving camp at 4.30 a.m. To save time and to keep the nets from sagging we used the linking method of erecting nets. Each unit could thus put up about 12 nets using 13 to 15 bamboos.

The churchyard of the Marthoma Church, Edanad, served as our site of ringing. The morning's catch would be ringed and released here, and by 11.30 a.m. our morning's work would be over. The evening sessions would start by 4.30 p.m. and finish by 9.30. About two-thirds of the catch was done in the mornings and about one-third in the evening. This method ensured minimum mortality to birds.

Compared with the collections of the previous years (Edanad), this year's catch shows appreciable increase in numbers of the Forest and Yellowheaded Wagtails. As in the season before a flock of about 100 white wagtails had an exclusive roost near the Marthoma Church. This year we recaptured 7 birds from the 29 ringed in 1962-63. Swallows shared the roost with Yellow and Forest Wagtails at Mangalam, but they left earlier in the mornings and arrive later at dusk than the wagtails.

It would have been difficult to achieve these results without the help and active cooperation received from Messrs Oommen, Thomas, Cherian, Vasupillai, and Kochukuttan of Edanad, to whom we would like to offer our thanks.

Daniel Mathew & P.B. Shokar

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#### THE GRANDALA, GRANDALA COELICOLOR HODGSON

My first view of this bird was under conditions most unfavourable, but fully up to the standards of environment I had mentally visualised after reading the little that had been written about this bird in the earlier works. This amounted to a short note in the FAUNA that they lived at very high altitudes along the Himalayas and even in winter rarely came below tree-line. The rest was filled in by my own imagination and as it was stated to be quite common in Manali (?) surroundings, and as I had never before seen it even as high as 17,000 ft. in Garhwal, I naturally assumed that only the highest altitude climbers would ever be privileged to set eyes on this. The male is a beautiful blue bird and skins in the Bombay Natural History Society's collection only further whetted my desire to see the birds.

My very first sight of this bird was in the summer of 1962 when early on a May morning I began to ascend the 13,400 ft. Rohtang Pass near Manali. After a couple of days of wet weather which held us up at the foot of the pass, this particular morning dawned without a fleck in the sky and the stars shone with luminous intensity over a breathlessly still scene. It was 5.00 a.m. when we started the climb. A couple of hundred feet up the switch-back of what was claimed to be a jeep road, we were hit by a gale of cold air racing down from the snow fields on the pass. This we had never expected and were not suitably clad for the cold, expecting to be near the snow when the sun would be well up. It was a strange experience to have the icy wind ranging around without trees to speak of its motion or a single cloud to say why it was there. Very soon the fingers lost their feeling, the nose and later the face became senseless and every step became a battle against the raging element, breathing hurt the lungs and as the body lost its heat and consumed its reserves, a fatigue grew which even standing, head bent against the wind, did not relieve.

Just as I was miserably plodding round the corner of the end-

less bends I heard a subdued cheew on the wind and instinctively looked up to see a flight of some half a dozen starling-like birds fly over and down. They apparently had landed round the corner and as I saw a couple of them with blue, my numbed brain rallied to vigour and signalled 'Grandalà' to the weary body, and at once the lassitude was gone and forgetting the agonies of an inefficient pair of limbs I panted up the road and looked down onto a small alp. Sure enough the birds were there, hopping around, the males, conspicuously blue in the half light of dawn, but by the time the cold fingers could focus the field glasses, the flock arose and sailed on outstretched wings further along the mountain, leaving in my tired body a new surge of expectancy, which helped me on to meet the warm rays of sun-light bathing the slopes a little above. Strangely enough I never saw the birds again on that day, nor on our way back from Lahoul after a week. I was disappointed.

On 26th May, I was again trudging up a mountain slope at 11,000 ft. The winter snow still blanketed the hills around Manali from the higher forests upwards, but on this day a magnificent blue sky promised a fine day's climb among the snowy slopes. Not a breath of wind stirred the drooping pine needles. The forests below were still chilled by winter and a cold lingered which seemed to still all bird song, but on the snow slopes above the world was all light and colour. As we emerged from the gloom of oaks and firs, a fox in magnificent winter fur raced across the snow stopping every now and then to give us a glance, before it disappeared into some bush in a ravine. It was so warm and we were happy to be here. Others had been here before us, for all over the snow there were footprints of monal, snowcock, foxes other than our friend, mountain sheep and bear, in fact a very fresh set of bear footprints led from one forest-choked gully into another. Overhead in the still air, great Lammergeiers and Griffons sailed majestically, while a pair of accentors flew out over the snow and then were lost in some furze lower down. We rested on a rock surrounded by soggy brown vegetation, an island of warmth, and roused life in a blanket of glittering snow which stretched ahead and up towards the fleckless sky. A strange langour swept over me as the sun shone down upon a magnificent scene of snow and forest overlooking a broad vista of chasms, the broad valley of the Beas beyond, and still further range upon range of blue mountains and overhead the blue dome of the sky. The mere physical fact of being in such a place seemed to still all ambitions, but yet the summit of our little mountain was high above us and so reluctantly I arose to lead onto the snowfield and then upwards towards a ridge which promised an easy path to the final slope to the top. The ridge had indeed been the correct route, for all along its top the snow had melted and provided a dry approach with a few yellow flowers peeping from brown humus of last year's summer, and here and there clusters of purple primulas gaily proclaimed the arrival of spring. On our right, was a gully which being to the south received the full benefit of the sun's warm rays, and the crumbling rock was all bare right till the final snowfield which then lay unblemished white to the shoulder behind which lay the summit.

Hemmed in by the thick mantle of snow, all the high altitude bird life had to resort to this gully and it was here that once again I heard the musical chew chew and sure enough a flock of Grandalà came gliding low overhead. The sun being overhead, the birds looked very dark, the male black while the females had a white wing bar. They were obviously approaching the breeding season, for the males were ever and anon gliding in superb flight to their chosen mates and with great dexterity they would tumble and dive down to the ground and then again

effortlessly up and up in great spirals into the limitless vaults of heaven. In flight they closely resembled the Ashy Swallow Shrikes which I had watched at Tulsi Lake, Bombay. Suddenly the whole flock of about a hundred birds wheeled and then dived with great speed on to the wet bare patches of vegetation just below us, and I got my first good chance of observing the birds at close range. With the sun behind me, and falling full onto the birds, the males shone a bright blue, their wings and tail a deep velvety black, fine birds by all standards. They were on the ground like Blue Rock Thrushes, with the same movements -- a flick of the wing, a slight dip forward and then a couple of hops to bring them to their prey and then again onto a rock to stand erect like a chat. Their habits showed a remarkable relationship with the chats though they were larger. Suddenly the males would fly up and with a swift turn to this side and that, they would approach the females of their choice and they would swiftly rise up and up, each followed by her swain into an ecstatic glide. They like the choughs which dwell in the same elements seem to revel in the air. This, taking frequently to the wing is rather unlike the other chats which they resemble in all other respects. No doubt they must be catching winged insects as food but while I watched these flights were entirely nuptial. It was obvious they were picking up insect prey while on the ground and that this was quite plentiful was apparent from the number of small gnat-like creatures, beetles, and butterflies which lay frozen on the snow. These undoubtedly rise up from the warm valleys below on the up-draughts and die in the snow. These then could also explain why often a barest patch of rock among snow should attract Horned Larks, and Redbrowed Rosefinch, both very high altitude birds.

K.S. Lavkumar

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### ASPECTS OF ORNITHOLOGY

Study of birds is known as Ornithology, or the science of bird knowledge. The bird population of an area is known as Avifauna. Ornithology like many other science has two parts:

- i. Pure science or knowledge of birds for the sake of knowledge only; and
- ii. Applied Ornithology, or knowing about birds to determine how many and which of them are useful to human economic activities, and which others harmful. The friends have to be encouraged and the foes to be controlled or eliminated.

Pure Ornithology has the following aims:

- i. Identification;
- ii. Classification; and
- iii. Explanation of distribution of birds.

Identification can be done on two basis:

- i. Morphological; and
- ii. Anatomical.

Morphology is the description of the exterior of birds, and identification has to be done on the basis of colours of the

different parts of a bird, its size, song, habits, flight, etc.  
-- all factors observable in the field.

Anatomical identification is done by dissecting birds and knowing their internal structure. This requires more equipment, and shooting or capturing of birds.

Classification is based more on anatomical evidence than on morphological and proceeds on estimating qualitatively and quantitatively the similarities and dissimilarities. The avifauna is divided in the following manner:

- i. ORDER - very broad similarities observable in a large number of birds, which are otherwise dissimilar.
- ii. FAMILY - many more similarities than among members of the same Order, and fewer dissimilarities.
- iii. GENUS - still more similarities, and still fewer dissimilarities.
- iv. SPECIES - very close resemblance, almost identical. Dissimilarities are mainly those expected amongst two individuals.

The distribution is affected by several factors:

- i. Climatic.
- ii. Topographical: (a) Land and water; (b) High mountain ranges; (c) Contiguity of areas with characteristic avifauna.
- iii. Vegetation: This is the main factor, for vegetation supplies both food and house to birds. In present times it has become more important because it also gives cover and shelter to birds and their eggs from destructive agencies like man.

Vegetation is itself dependent upon:

- (a) Climate;
- (b) Topography;
- (c) Human activity.

Birds are, however, (because of their power of flight) less limited than either plants or other animals in their distribution by climatic or topographical factors. In fact large expanses of sea are the only obstacles to birds spreading from one region to another.

Birds though dependent upon vegetation and indirectly on climate and topography are freer of the climatic and topographic restrictions because generally in each climatic or topographical region they find corresponding food and shelter from the different vegetation.

One factor observable about bird distribution is their migratory habits. These migrations are seasonal

- i. Climatic migrations over large areas and over long distances; and
- ii. Local migrations with food variations.

The explanation of bird migrations and distribution brings one to the subject of foods of birds, and that is where Applied Ornithology begins, for birds are beneficial or harmful to human economic activity through their feeding habits.

(Mrs.) Jamal Ara



'I NAME THIS PARROT' . . . By Arthur A. Prestwich. pp. 118 plus Appendix (22 x 14 cm.). England 1963. Arthur A. Prestwich, Kent. Price ?

We learn from the preface to the first edition published in March 1958, which is reproduced in the 2nd edition of March 1963 that there are in all 778 members of the Order Psittaciformes. Out of these 173 species are named after persons who have either been responsible for discovering the species, or who have otherwise been deserving enough to have their names permanently associated with the new find. In the SYNOPSIS 23 species are listed under the Family Psittacidae, and I am reproducing information in respect of two species to give the reader an idea of the information which this book contains.

pp. 97-8. 'Psittacula longicauda tytleri (Hume)

'Palacornis Tytleri Hume, Str. Feath., 2, 1874, p. 454.

'Tytler's or Andaman Long-tailed Parrakeet.

Allan Hume: "I have named the Andaman bird, P. Tytleri, in memory of my late friend (Colonel Tytler) who did so much towards the elucidation of the Avifauna of the Andaman Islands."

Colonel R.C. Tytler (1818-1872), C.M.Z.S., formed a large collection of birds from most parts of the world. This collection, well known through the writings of Hume and Beavan to all students of Indian ornithology, was originally housed by its collector at his residence 'Bonnie Moon', in Simla. When Colonel Tytler died the skins were removed from the 'Museum room' and packed away in boxes, which were stored in the house. The date of this would appear to be about 1873. Due to the frequent absences of Mrs. Tytler in England and elsewhere the boxes long remained unopened. The collection eventually came into the possession of Mr. B. Bevan-Potman who presented it to the Lahore Central Museum in 1917.

In 1918 Hugh Whistler opened the boxes and found the collection to be in a very unsatisfactory state, as was to be expected after more than forty years' neglect. While a few skins were in perfect condition, the majority had been entirely ruined by damp and insects. There were about 2500 skins salvaged, many of which were, however, only worth keeping until they could be replaced by newer specimens. (Ibis)

P. 108. 'Psittacula alexandri alexandri (Linnaeus)

'Psittacus alexandri Linnaeus, Syst. Nat., ed. 10, 1, 1758, p. 97. Javan Parrakeet.

The Alexandrine Parrakeet (P. eupatria nipalensis) is popularly supposed to have been the first parrot known to the ancient Greeks, having been discovered during the expeditions of Alexander the Great, by whose followers it was brought to Europe. There can be no doubt that the Indian conquests of Alexander were directly responsible for making the parrakeet better known in Europe. It can only be guessed whether the species first brought was the Ceylon Alexandrine Parrakeet Psittacula eupatria eupatria or the smaller Ring-necked P. krameri manillensis. Onesicritus, Admiral of the Fleet of

Alexander the Great, is said to have first brought from Ceylon a green parrot with a red neck. This vague description could, of course, apply to either. But what is certain is that the species that derives its scientific name from the Macedonian king was in no way even remotely connected with him.'

Z.F.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### Disturbing the Controls of Nature

From time to time there is a request from sportsmen and naturalists who have not studied the relationships between various species of birds carefully enough for the extermination of predators. Ultimately it is found that reducing the number of predators far from helping the threatened species depletes its numbers even more. This happened some years ago in the case of the Bobwhite Quail in the United States. Sportsmen insisted that a falcon which was preying on these quails should be killed. This step was taken but the numbers of the quails instead of increasing decreased alarmingly. It was only when a thorough study was made of the food habits of the falcon it was found that its diet consisted very largely of field mice which were really principally responsible for the depredation on the eggs and young of these quails. Birds of prey were allowed to breed unchecked again, and after some years when the balance of nature was restored the Bobwhite Quail started to multiply.

Another recent case shows the truth of the old adage that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. We are reproducing a note which appeared in the January 1964 issue of Defenders of Wildlife News Bulletin, at p. 5:

'Controls! Let Nature handle them: "At one time an important game bird in Norway, the willow grouse, was so clearly threatened with extinction that it was thought wise to establish protective regulations and to place a bounty on its chief enemy, a hawk which was known to feed heavily on it. Quantities of the hawks were exterminated, but despite such drastic measures the grouse disappeared actually more rapidly than before. The natively applied customary remedies had obviously failed. But instead of becoming discouraged and quietistically letting this bird go the way of the great auk and the passenger pigeon, the authorities enlarged the scope of their investigations until the anomaly was explained. An ecological analysis into the relational aspects of the situation disclosed that a parasitic disease, coccidiosis, was epizootic among the grouse. In its incipient stages, this disease so reduced the flying speed of the grouse that the mildly ill individuals became easy prey for the hawks. In living largely off the slightly ill birds, the hawks prevented them from developing the disease in its full intensity and so spreading it more widely and quickly to otherwise healthy fowl. Thus the presumed enemies of the grouse, by controlling the epizootic aspects of the disease, proved to be friends in disguise.'

There is another interesting note about the preservation of Kirtland's Warbler in the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, January 1964 issue, p. 3:

'It is refreshing to have recently received details of

a surely unique and in any event quite remarkable, intensive for-est management plan, designed solely to ensure the survival of a very small song bird. The bird concerned is the tiny Kirtland's Warbler (Dendroica kirtlandii) which breeds only in central Michigan, USA and winters in the Bahama Islands. Censuses carried out in 1951 and 1961 showed that less than 1000 examples of the species remained, and it was found that essential for their breeding and survival were thickets of young jack pine trees, not less than 5 feet and not more than 15 feet in height. It appears that as soon as the trees reach the age at which their lowest branches leave the ground, so do the Kirtland's Warblers leave the area. The US Forest Service have set up the Kirtland's Warbler Management Area, of 4010 acres, in the Huron National Forest, to preserve the nesting habitat of this rare little bird. Controlled burning, timber harvesting, and special plantings produce the young pine trees required for nesting.

The example set by this remarkable and praiseworthy enterprise is one which could without doubt be emulated in many parts of the world, when urgently needed research has divulged the precise requirements of some of the truly threatened smaller creatures.'

#### CORRESPONDENCE

##### Falconry

Extracts from a letter received from Mrs. Raj Bedi, Ashoka Hotel, New Delhi, in response to an article on falconry by the Editor published in The Times of India, Sunday Edition, in March.

'Your article on the Royal sport of Falconry was of great interest to me. My husband (the late Brigadier A.S. Bedi) came from a family where this sport was given very great importance and the beauty was that he kept it up in spite of his busy life. One of his dreams was that we should have institutions to inculcate interest in this pastime. He used to write to all those whom he thought might help.

'Falconry is a wonderful sport and a person who has the patience to train these birds derives an immense pleasure when he sees the falcons in action. The jingling of the bells, and Baz (Goshawk) swooping down for his prey and the chase is something fascinating. I have spent hours and hours with my husband in the fields. One season with a Basha (Sparrow Hawk) our record was to bring home three partridges a day. The Basha was given a bit of one, and the rest was useful for us.

'My husband has been to the high mountains near Rajouri when he caught a lovely Jural (♂ Goshawk). It was a beauty and what a clever bird it was. Once the whole family spent quite an interest/time in Palampur and the operations to catch the Baz (♀ Goshawk) and Basha were interesting indeed. My father-in-law, Baba Surinder Singh has still got some Baz and Bashas that my husband used to keep. In fact my father-in-law is quite a wizard in training these birds -- as a youngster he used to have a passion for this sport. In fact some of his paintings of Hawks are beautiful. It is some indication how much interest he took in these birds.

'In Ranchi we had a pair of Merlins and your description of how one bird cuts off the retreat of the quarry, while the

other strikes it down is quite true. Another very interesting feature of our Merlin was that as soon as anybody entered the room where their perch was they used to make a very peculiar noise. Evidently they were very useful as we always knew that somebody had entered the room.

'You will be quite interested to know that even a Shikra can be trained to give an idea how doves and pigeons can be caught for the poor man's pot. I had a large collection of love birds and on many an occasion when a Shikra used to come to attack the cage my husband used to trap it and train it. After catching the Shikra the eyes used to be sewn with silk thread -- sounds very cruel but it is a painless process. One could really hood the shikra but there was a danger of hurting it. Next thing was to jacket the bird and ~~for this used~~ to bandage its tail. This was just to prevent the bird from fluttering too much. It is obvious that a bird which loses its freedom resented its captivity and also out of fear just got restless. All this rendered to keep the bird in proper shape for successful ~~flight~~ flights in quest of prey. The aim was to keep the shikra in the noisiest part of the house, all the children were allowed to make noise and once the bird got used to hustle and bustle its eyes were opened and it was allowed to be carried about on the fist of all the family members. My little son used to take a great delight in carrying the bird on his fist

'As time went on the bird was given short spells of freedom on an empty stomach and was lured back either with a live quail or a false bird(?). Once the shikra was trained it was great fun to see it swoop on pigeons, doves and other birds.

(Mrs.) Raj Bedi'

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#### A Blue Tit with malformed beak

This may interest readers of the Newsletter. Owen Martin (207, Petersham Road, Petersham, Surrey, England) in a recent letter to me writes: 'We had a Blue Tit with malformed beak - crossed over and an inch long. The poor little devil could only eat cake, and you can bet M kept him going on that, so I decided to operate. Trapped him in the cake tin and performed with nail clippers. This was some weeks ago, and as I hadn't seen him, I feared the operation hadn't been a success. Well, he turned up yesterday (you can tell him as the beak still looks odd). Very gratifying it was, specially as he can now eat almost normally.'

G.S. Ranganathan

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#### Baybacked Shrikes

With reference to 'A tip to Birdwatchers' by Dr. Salim Ali in the April issue of the Newsletter I note Dr. Ali's point that the idea of the blind nestling reaching the bush is inconceivable. He is good enough to suggest that this is perhaps not actually what I meant, and that the chick I saw in the bush 'ignoring the yet unopened eyes' belonged probably to some other pair of Baybacked Shrikes.

I did mean that the blind nestling reached the bush. As I said in my paper, I myself was mystified.

I am certain that no other pair of Baybacked Shrikes nested or was present at Kasauli during that June.

As far as I can recall, judging from the size of the nestlings first seen on the 7th June, the blind nestling seen on the 11th was probably 6-8 days old. Normally the eyes should have been open by then. But is there a fixed day for the opening of the eyes of each species? John Buxton in his monograph on the Redstart says that the nestlings' eyes 'do not open until sometime between the fifth and the ninth days' (p. 61).

When I saw the shrikes bring food to the bush about 14-15 ft. from the nesting tree I went down with great difficulty. (Unfortunately the sentence 'with difficulty I went down near the bush' in the manuscript was omitted by the typist and I also overlooked the omission when correcting it. This probably gave the impression that the bush was not in the grove but 30 ft. up the road somewhere near me.)

I had never seen a shrike chick of that size, so I wanted to have a good look at it. But when I approached the bush one parent was terribly agitated so I had a quick look but it was enough for me to see that the eyes were closed. (At least the eye turned towards me.) I left the place immediately.

I can think of several possible explanations for the unopened eyes.

1. The chick had fallen 13 ft. from its nest on the 8/9th June with possible injuries. It was drenched in the rain for several hours and had made the incredible journey to the bush. It must have been in an extremely exhausted condition and probably sat with its eyes closed when I saw it. The chick probably died that day as it was not seen on the 12th and the female had already selected the nest site for the second brood on the 12th morning.

2. Could the fall from the nest have retarded the opening of the eyes by 1-2 days?

3. The fall may have injured the eyes making the chick blind.

Incidentally, I saw the parents bring food to the bush but did not see the chick being fed because as I have mentioned it was partially covered by the leaves.

Now about the journey to the bush. It is obvious that the chick could not fly from the nest at that age. The only explanation is that somehow it 'wobbly hopped' to the bush guided by its parents with encouraging calls.

I must admit that when I saw the blind chick on the 11th and took notes or when I wrote the article I had not calculated the age of the chick so that blindness had not appeared strange, only the arrival at the bush seemed extraordinary.

(Mrs.) Usha Ganguli

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#### Birdwatching in the Corbett National Park

60 hours at Corbett National Park, only few spent in birdwatching, produced 45 different varieties, including nine not previously seen and two which I cannot trace.

The nine included Tickell's Willow Warbler, Rosefinch, Common Indian Nightjar, Indian Tree Pipit, Black Eagle, Yellow-bellied (or -throated? - Ed.) Sparrow, Crested Hawk Eagle,

Red Junglefowl, and a Thickbilled Flowerpecker.

The first unidentified was the size of and had the same perching habits as the Bee-eater. Black cap like the Orphean Warbler. Thin pointed bill. White collar all round neck. Whitish front. Light brown back. Longish tail. A black streak along the leading edge of the wing at rest with a most conspicuous white streak next to it, fading to the light brown of the back.

The second unidentified obviously of the sparrow family. A marked circular hollow-looking white patch over the ear coverts and below, with black markings from beak above and below this patch. Top of head dark grey; beak thinner than a bunting. White breast with vertical rufous stripes where the breast pockets would be. Wings slightly lighter than a sparrow. Back with rufous smarkings. Habits sparrow-like.

I forget to add that the first one was seen fairly high in tallish trees, jumping and flitting as if flycatching -- a very restless bird at times.

Rough sketches herewith. What are they?

W.D.C. Erskine Crum

/The sketches have been sent to the Bombay Natural History Society to compare with the skins in the collections of the Society. - Ed./

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#### Pugnacious behaviour of breeding Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher

In Udaipur a pair of Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatchers built their nest on a gold mohur tree just above our garden gate. The nest was about 12 feet above the ground. When I climbed to have a look at the clutch to my surprise the incubating bird made no sign of leaving the nest. I reached out and actually stroked its back with my finger. Apart from opening its beak wide and trying to peck at my hand the bird made no move to leave. I had to scoop her out of the nest with my finger to see the clutch. Even then the bird did not fly far but sat on the nearest branch fidgeting about. When I covered the nest with my hand it came and sat on the hand trying with feeble pecks to make me take away the hand.

Perhaps the birds had become very familiar with human beings frequently using the garden gate; still such an extraordinary boldness of theirs has always intrigued me and may interest the readers.

Nahar Singh,

Wellinton, Nilgiris.

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Zafar Futchally,  
Editor: Newsletter for Birdwatchers,  
32-A Juhu Lane,  
Andheri, Bombay 58

NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDCATCHERS

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EARLY BREEDING RECORDS FOR COASTAL  
ORISSA

1964 is the first season during which we have been keeping systematic records. These are given in the following table, together with the month given for the beginning of breeding by two authorities.

		<u>Sálim Ali</u> <u>6th ed.</u>	<u>Whistler</u> <u>4th ed.</u>
1. <u>Bubulcus ibis</u>	14/5	June	June
2. <u>Haliaeetus leuco-</u> <u>gaster</u>	19/1	October	--
3. <u>Vanellus malabaricus</u>	8/2	April	March
4. <u>Sturnus contra</u>	13/5	March	May
5. <u>Acridotheres tristis</u>	21/3	April	June
6. <u>Saxicoloides fulicata</u>	4/3	April	March
7. <u>Ploceus philippinus</u>	4/4	May	April

Species 3 and 6 nested on the ground in our garden, '6 being sheltered; 5 was on (or in) a metal tubular telephone pole immediately outside it, 4 were in great numbers on trees, telephone and electric supply poles in a similar residential suburb of New Bhubaneswar. Species 2 was in a Casuarina tree on the edge of the compound of the temple of Konarak. Species 1

were on a tamarind tree in College Square, Cuttack, and 7 on a Borassus palm on the Pipli-Jatni Road.

It will be seen that five out of the seven species were breeding earlier than was expected according to at least one authority.

About 50 individuals of species 1 in breeding plumage, at least one carrying nest building material, and one or two probably incomplete nests, were present in a tree which had been kept under observation as egrets had bred in it in 1963. They had been last seen on 31/8/63 and were not present on 29/4/64. Cattle egrets in breeding plumage were first recorded on 4/3.

Four eggs were found in the first nest of species 3 and a second clutch of 4 eggs was found on 13/2. (We have extensive records for this species.) The date given for species 5 was that on which nest building material was first seen being brought. The parent birds are still attending to this nest. The date given for species 6 was that on which the first egg was laid. We had watched nest material being brought since 2/3. Only two eggs were laid and these were destroyed by 11/3. However young robins 'learning' to fly were seen from the second week of April onwards. The baya colony contained about 30 nests when found, in three of which the egg chambers were complete. New communities of nests have been appearing continually since this first colony was found.

There is no indication that this year has been exceptionally early. Lanius cristatus and Hirundo rustica were seen here as late as the first and second weeks of May respectively. The ecologically important premonsoon rains have been late. Does breeding start earlier in Orissa than in other parts of Northern India, both in the dry and the rainy seasons?

S.D. Jayakar & H. Spurway

Genetics & Biometry Laboratory, Govt.  
of Orissa, Bhubaneswar 3, Orissa  
May 18, 1964

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LIST OF BIRDS SEEN IN THE PERIYAR WILD  
LIFE SANCTUARY, KERALA

The United States Information Service, Trivandrum, held a seminar on American Literature at Thekkady on the 1st and 2nd of April 1964. I had the good fortune to be one of the invitees. As far as birdwatching is concerned, I was not so fortunate for the time available for outings was very limited. Still, I managed to snatch a few minutes every now and then and go about the immediate neighbourhood of the Aranya Nivas and Edappalayam Tourist Bungalows where, by turns, we had our meetings. Almost all the birds listed here will, therefore, be found to be those occurring in places within easy reach of the casual visitor.

Of the two Tourist Bungalows, the one at Edappalayam is much less attractive to the birdwatcher. The Aranya Nivas Bungalow and the II Class Tourist Bungalow close by are just ideal. The whole area is full of large trees and, judging by the surprising number of very large nests on these trees, should be most interesting during the period (November, December, January?) when the large birds of prey breed there. Many of the trees carry boards which give their botanical, vulgar, and local



names, too.

Most of the birds listed are those seen during three hours spent wandering about between Aranya Nivas and the II Class Tourist bungalow on 3rd April.

I have no surprises in store for those who have watched birds in Thekkady. Of the 135 or so birds which Dr. Salim Ali records /see 'The Ornithology of Travancore and Cochin', J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 37(4) through 39(3)/ for the area, I saw (and, in a few instances, only heard!) 62. Some of the shier birds did not venture to enter the bungalow grounds; most of the migrants were absent or so rare that they were missed.

The only 'exciting' experience of the trip was the discovery of a roost of the Grey Wagtail (Motacilla caspica) at Edappalayam about which I have sent a note to the Journal of the Bombay nat. Hist. Society.

#### List of Birds

Note. As all the names in the list are based on those used in Salim Ali's BIRDS OF TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN (Oxford Univ. Press 1953) the scientific names are not given here.

1. Jungle Crow; 2. Velvetfronted Nuthatch - numerous parties; 3. Jungle Babbler; 4. Scimitar Babbler (only heard); 5. Iora; 6. Yellowbrowed Bulbul - pairs; 7. Redwhiskered Bulbul; 8. Whistling Thrush; 9. Blacknaped Flycatcher; 10. Brown Shrike\*; 11. Malabar Woodshrike; 12. Orange Minivet; 13. Ashy Swallow-shrike; 14. Ashy Drongo\*; 15. ?Bronzed Drongo - seen near Vandiperiyar from moving bus; 16. Racket-tailed Drongo; 17. Blyth's Reed-warbler\*; 18. Greenish (?) Willow-warbler\*; 19. Indian Oriole\* -- \*only ♀♀ seen!; 20. Southern Grackle; 21. Blyth's Myna (flocks); 22. Jungle Myna; 23. House Sparrow - only at Vandiperiyar; 24. Large Pied Wagtail; 25. Grey Wagtail\*; 26. Forest Wagtail\* -- \*roosting in Silver Oak at Edappalayam; 27. ?Malay Pipit; 28. Purple Sunbird; 29. Nilgiri Flowerpecker; 30. Indian Pitta (heard only); 31. Pigmy Woodpecker; 32. Malabar Golden-backed Woodpecker; 33. Malherbe's Goldenback Woodpecker; 34. Small Green Barbet - nest; family parties; 35. Crimsonthroated ? Barbet (heard, not seen); 36. Southern Crow-Pheasant; 37. Blossomheaded Parrakeet; 38. Bluewinged Parrakeet; 39. Lorikeet - heard, not properly seen; 40. Indian Roller - in Lake; 41. Common Ceylon Kingfisher - in Lake; 42. Pied Kingfisher - in Lake; 43. Whitebreasted Kingfisher; 44. Great Indian Hornbill - singleton in flight over Aranya Nivas; 45. Malabar Trogon - pair; 47. Whiterumped Spintail ? Swift - flock over Edappalayam; 48. Jungle Owlet; 49. King Vulture; 50. Whitebacked Vulture; 51. Brahminy Kite; 52. Pariah Kite; 53. Blackwinged Kite - near Vandiperiyar; 54. Shikra; 55. Jordon's Imperial Pigeon; 56. Grey Junglefowl; 57. Darter - fewer than expected, solitary, whenever seen sitting like statues on dead tree stumps in lake, adults only; 58. Pond Heron - non-breeding plumage; 59. Large (or Smaller ?) Egret - in lake; 60. Little Egret - in Lake; 61. Yellowcheeked Tit; 62. Crested Serpent-Eagle.

The Yellowcheeked Tit, the Pied Kingfisher, and the two egrets have not been included by Salim Ali among the birds collected or seen in the Periyar Lake area.

Sri N.G. Pillai tells me that, on one of his visits to the place, he saw an occupied nest of the Whitenecked Stork very near Aranya Nivas.

While cruising in the lake to see wild life, one comes across very few birds. The forest gives one the feeling that it is totally devoid of bird life, except for the vultures overhead and few kingfishers, swallow-shrikes, darters, and jungle mynas seen over the water or on the dead trees standing in the lake.

To the birdwatcher who does not normally get a chance to see the birds of our southern hills, a few days spent at one of the Tourist Bungalows some time between November and March will provide an excellent introduction to them.

\* \* K.K. Noelakantan \* \*

### THE WHITETHROATED GROUND THRUSH AND SOME OTHER BIRDS IN KIHIM, MAHARASHTRA.

Last year in May, while I was in Kihim, our favourite seaside village in the Kolaba District, I had with great difficulty managed to locate a Whitethroated Ground Thrush singing from a tree. I had written then in my monthly column in The Times of India that this thrush has great ventriloquistic qualities and the song seems to come from several directions at the same time. This year again the thrushes were singing in the same patch of jungle and at times I was unable to locate the bird even though I knew that it would not be more than 50 yards away.

The first time that I saw this thrush this season was on the 2nd of May, the first Saturday of the month, and thereafter I continued to watch one particular individual every Saturday and Sunday for the whole of the month. The bird had taken up its residence in a patch of forest a couple of hundred yards behind the sea. It is an idyllic place, a type of unspoilt jungle which is fast disappearing from our country. In an area of about 5 acres there are Casuarinas, ber, sandal, bhendi, shivani, Odina wardi, Ficus glomerata, Bombax, Erythrina, neem, coconut, charba, kranj, and asuna trees. There is a thick undergrowth of lantana, and the ground is littered with dry leaves on which babblers of all types love to scrounge for food. I used to go and lie down in a corner and wait for the thrust to start calling. Then by slow stages I advanced towards the singer until I located the bird. When the bird was engaged in singing I could advance to within 50 ft. without its flying away. This particular bird had injured its left claw so that as far as possible it would be standing on its right leg only with the left lifted clear off the branch where it was perched. This was a useful identification mark for me. The song of this thrush could be heard from several hundred yards away. The tune was fairly varied and was interspersed with the calls of many other birds and I was often misled into believing that it was some other bird which was singing. The commonest tune consisted of 9 notes. The top mandible moved upward very slightly, but the lower one moved through a wide area, and evidently the bird had to put some effort into producing these far-carrying notes.

Salim Ali in his THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS says that the bird is mainly terrestrial. Curiously from the 2nd to the 23rd of May during all the hours that I watched this bird it never descended to the ground, and I never saw it eat at all. My usual watching hours were from 8 to 11 in the morning, and from 5 to 6 in the evening.

Once, rather early in May, I was very excited as I saw two birds close together and I thought they might be a nesting pair - or at least preparing to do so. The ♂ was singing from a tree, and another bird went into a lantana scrub under the tree. At my

approach this bird uttered a sharp chik, chik, and I fondly imagined that it was because I was near its nest. I searched the place thoroughly without finding anything at all. Stuart Baker says that the nesting season is in June-July, but during the whole of May I was hoping to see some signs of nest building, or at least courtship.

On the 23rd of May I found the bird singing high up from a Casuarina. When the bird is perched high up it is not too difficult to find it, but when it is only a few feet from the ground the song is much more misleading as to its direction and distance. On the evening of the same day I went to the forest patch at 5 p.m. and sat down in the hope of listening to the thrush. A bird came and sat on a casuarina in front of me. When I saw it through my binoculars I was surprised to see that it was a Whitethroated Ground Thrush. But it was not the one with the injured claw, and it was silent. Perhaps it was a ♀, destined to mate with the male with the injured claw -- a bird over which I seemed to have acquired proprietary rights, having observed it for so long. I froze on the ground as well as I could though it was silly of me to have come with a blood red shirt. The bird forgot all about me after a while and got busy with its toilet. From the leisurely pace of this activity, I was sure that it was a female. After a while to my great delight another Whitethroated Ground Thrush came on the scene, and I conjured up visions of interesting developments in my mind. It must have been about 6 p.m. One bird hopped on to the ground. When it was stationary it was bolt upright. When it hopped forward on both legs, like a babbler or an Indian Robin the body was horizontal. Soon the second bird came to the ground and for several minutes I could see both birds together through my binoculars (7 x 50). Both the birds were feeding close together for the rest of the time that I noted them. Neither uttered a sound. Twice they 'beaked' each other, and I thought that on one of the occasions the male (which was larger and whose colours were slightly brighter) passed on a tit bit to the other. I was not quite sure whether this male was the same one which I had been watching all these days. On the ground he seemed to use both his feet equally well. I hope that during the next week-end and perhaps later on in June, I will be able to visit this patch and see the development of this affair.

While I was watching this pair of Whitethroated Ground Thrush, I was consistently distracted by other happenings. A pair of Whitebreasted Kingfisher landed on a bread tree. A Goldenbacked Woodpecker came and pecked at the insects that hid between the berries of the Odina wodi tree. A flock of Greyheaded Mynas arrived, sidling up the branches of the same tree and inspected the bark closely for insects. I believe they also ate the berries. A group of babblers flew into a lantana bush. Bayas occasionally sang in chorus ho-jee, ho-jee. A mongoose went by and behind me a group of birds kept up an agitated chorus. Through all that duration I found it difficult to concentrate entirely on the thrushes and at about six o'clock I lost sight of them and decided to go elsewhere. The evening before, after sunset I had seen a group of birds which were considerably larger than Sandpiper, but I did not have my binoculars then and could not make out what they were. I went to the same spot and found the birds on the edge of the shore. The light was bad and I could not be sure but it seemed likely that they were Golden Plovers.

As I have written earlier, Kihim is a delightful place for birds. On the morning of the 23rd we went to the village tank and found a group of about a dozen Whistling Teal in the water. Around them

approach this bird uttered a sharp chik, chik, and I fondly imagined that it was because I was near its nest. I searched the place thoroughly without finding anything at all. Stuart Baker says that the nesting season is in June-July, but during the whole of May I was hoping to see some signs of nest building, or at least courtship.

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As I have written earlier, Kihim is a delightful place for birds. On the morning of the 23rd we went to the village tank and found a group of about a dozen Whistling Teal in the water. Around them were dabchicks, Bronzewinged Jacanas, Kingfisher, and Pond Heron.

On the edge of the pond there were Rufoustailed Larks, Redwattled Lapwings, Crested Larks, and on a meadow some distance away a pair of Yellow-Wattled Lapwings.

On the morning of the 24th I went out with Mr. Humayun Abdulali to Rowas. In the Avecinia swamp near the pier we located a Large Reed Warbler, Acrocephalus stentoreus calling away loudly. It is suspected that these birds nest in this region but to my knowledge no nests have yet been obtained. On the way up while we were in the car we noticed a Lapwing walking rather purposefully in a field about 30 yards away from us. Mr. Abdulali suspected that it was making for its nest, and he was right. Within a few seconds the bird knelt down and shuffled itself over its solitary egg. I have never before found a Lapwing's nest so easily.

Compared with many other areas round about the bird life of Kihim has not suffered during the past few years, one of the reasons for this being that the wooded areas have remained intact. In fact some landlords have done some intensive planting of Casuarina and Erythrina trees. May this happy state of affairs continue for a long time. The only birds which have disappeared to my knowledge are a pair of Crested Honey Buzzards and the Whitebellied Sea Eagle. Both species used to nest here for many years (the former till 1948, and the latter till the early fifties), but are no more to be seen.

Zafar Futehally

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#### RESCUE OF A COPPERSMITH, MEGALAIMA HAEMACEPHALA

Today (21.3.'64) early in the morning, when I was almost ready for leaving home to office, I heard some children quarrelling outside my room. I peeped out of the room to know what the matter was. There were about eight boys, and one of them was holding a Coppersmith in his hands. I went quickly and took the bird from him and afterwards enquired how he managed to get it. Soon came the reply from others in a voice, as it were (pointing out the boy who had held the bird), that it was he who caught it by the help of a catapult. Thereupon, I strongly advised the boy not to repeat what he did. He agreed and all the boys left the place.

The bird was very weak and one of its eyes was half-closed, while the other was fully open but without its natural lustre. It did not show any sign of recovery, despite my nursing it for five or ten minutes. Meanwhile it had drunk some grape juice which I caused to trickle down its throat from my finger tips. As there was not much time at my disposal to render my service longer for it, I soon converted a wire-work in the shape of a basket, used for keeping potatoes and onions, into an improvised cage. Also I placed a dry twig across the cage, on which, afterwards, the bird was allowed to perch, and it for some did well. However, after a while, it gradually nosed down breathing heavily, but not relaxing the grip on the twig. I came to the conclusion that it was passing its last minutes, and could do nothing but to leave it to itself. I went to office and the day passed unattended. Some grapes were hung there inside, and I thought if it wanted it could eat.

When I came back in the evening, first thing I asked my brother was whether the bird was getting better or not. To my surprise, he said not only was it quite all right but even it gobbled

down some of the grapes. Half believing what he said I hurried myself in and saw the bird -- it was perching well with closed eyes, presumably sleeping.

Next morning (22.3.'64) the bird was found to be very active inside the cage. Yet I did not allow the bird to go off. My plan was to keep the bird with me till it gained back enough energy to fend and defend itself. To recover fully its lost energy, I thought it required a few days rest and good food.

In the evening, seeing the bird extremely restless and eager to set itself free, contrary to my earlier decision, I took off the lid of the cage. It flew to a ventilator, near the top of the wall. This ventilator is covered with mesh-work which did not allow the bird to squeeze through. It struggled hard; all the same, I particularly noticed, it did not care to explore other ways to get out of the room. Its attention seemed to have converged at a narrow area and therefore with intensity. To it light and height were the signs of safety and freedom. At last the bird losing much of its energy in the struggle could not sustain its efforts long, slipped its grip and slowly fell down to the ground. I took it again back to the cage where it rested for one full hour peacefully. However, it soon showed signs of having recovered from fatigue and exhaustion as it began to dash at mesh work of the cage. Once again I set it free.

This time the bird chose another direction; not that of the ventilator which being at a greater distance, but towards a photo-frame, hung on the wall obliquely close by. From there it flew on to one of the wooden beams set across the walls of the house. For some reason, I had to go out; leaving the bird inside the room with doors and windows open, so that the bird could go out if it wanted to. When I came back, after a few minutes I did not see the bird inside the room.

I took seat to read again a book which I left partly read, pacifying myself that the bird ~~xxxxxxxx~~ at last might have found a way out. By and by I heard a lapping sound in quick succession. It was from the kitchen, there was no doubt. So I went to the kitchen and carefully scanned every nook and corner, but I could not notice anything moving or hear any sound, there. I came back to the seat and took the book in hand once again to read. Hardly did I enter into reading when I heard the same sound from the same direction. I left the seat at once and was quick on my heels to locate the sound. The bird was lying in a bucket which contained fortunately a little water only, not sufficient to drown it. Exhausted with the weight of water and of its repeated wing strokes to fly over the walls of the bucket the bird was resting at the bottom, head turned upwards. At the sight of me, it collected some strength and kept on trying in vain. I scooped the bird immediately out of the water and placed it in the cage. Drenched and draggled that night it remained there shivering.

Early in the morning (23.3.'64) the bird was seen in bright plumes. Evidently this must have been due to the unpleasant bath it had the day before in the bucket. There were quite a few grapes lying in the cage, however I wanted to say to my brother to purchase some more fruits and give them to the bird. Yet I forgot to do so. That day when I came back to the room after the day's work, I was told that the bird had flown away. I also learnt from neighbours that it mistakenly went into their house. They tried to catch it and at that time it flew out

straight into a tree, standing near our room. I wonder now what fancy drove this bird to re-enter the house once it was out in the open air. Is it showing strain of tamability?

T.V. Jose

Room No. 6, Maude Line No. 26  
Colaba, Bombay 5

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### MORNING CHORUS

It is exactly 5.30 a.m., on the morning of Sunday, April 5, 1964. The sky is clear and the air so still that you can almost cut it with a knife. The planet Jupiter, or I think it is Jupiter, shines over us brightly like a heavenly sentinel. Then suddenly the stillness is split wide open by the lonely but sharp call of a Koel, ku-hoo ku-hoo. It is picked up by others, about a dozen of them, and in a matter of seconds the whole place becomes alive with their calls, as they wake up, one after another, like a chain reaction.

Enter the Black Drongos with their sweet piping notes. The common crow not to be left behind, joins in with his harsh caw-caw. The bunch of mynas are disturbed in the neem tree, where they have been resting during the night, and they explode with violence. The cue is then picked up by the parakeets, who playfully start accusing each other. A pair of crow-pheasants let go their hud hud hud from the reeds, followed by the jingling quarrelsome babble of the seven sisters or satbhai. The redvented bulbul keeps on whistling in accompaniment. The blue rock pigeons, about ten pairs of them in the verandah holes, start flapping their wings and issue out their gutru-gun gutru-gun. So do the two species of doves, the ringed dove and the little brown dove, kuk-koo-koo and kuntre-kutre-kutre-re respectively. This wakes up the grey partridge on a babul tree and he comes out with a challenging call patcelo-patcelo, as if throwing a challenge to the whole world to come and fight if any one wishes to. The tailor bird keeps on singing tuweet-tu tuweet-tu. Then comes floating on the air the sweet mellow whistles of the Green Pigeon, followed by the liquid notes of a golden oriole like a soothing balm, something like didn't-I-tell you?. The sparrows are alive and chirping away for all they are worth. The green barbet suddenly chips in like a later comer and bursts like a cracker kut-kut-kut-kut kutre kutre kutre-r-re-re, and as a grand finale the barn owl hoots once, twice and then again in disgust that the night has ended, followed by the monotonous calls of the Brain Fever Bird.

The day has begun. What a pleasant way to start your day.

Major A. David

Moerut Cantt.

### NOTES AND COMMENTS

From time to time appeals have been made to our readers to send in clippings, extracts and precis of articles on birds which they come across. Will readers please cooperate with the editor and keep sending 'second hand' material which can be used when original notes have not come in. Book reviews, and review articles based on books are badly needed.



Our projects to study the movements of Rosy Pastors and to study the life history of the House Sparrow have not made any progress at all. But there is hope still for Dr. Helen Spurway has written from Bhubaneshwar that she can help with the Sparrow enquiry.

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#### CORRESPONDENCE

##### Strange behaviour of a Grey Partridge chick

On 30th April 1964 I went out fishing with my wife to a small river about 6 miles from here. It was six in the morning. The width of the river was about 20 yards and depth 6 to 10 ft. The river banks were strewn with big boulders and amongst them we saw a small chick of the grey partridge. It could not be more than a month old. Seeing us it froze and its protective coloration blended beautifully with the surroundings. We went closer to it but could not locate it when all of a sudden it took alarm and flapped out almost from underneath our feet. It could not fly and zigzagged through the boulders squealing pathetically. And as we chased it, it suddenly jumped into the water and my wife took a sigh of alarm expecting every moment a tragedy of suicide by drowning. But it simply flapped its wings and like a coot running on water went across the stream and jumped on the other side and disappeared. If the parents were there, which I am sure they must have been, they did not show up.

Mr. Editor can you or other readers of the Newsletter throw light on this behaviour, as I have never seen a grey partridge swim, leave alone its chick.

Major A. David  
Meerut

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Zafar Futehally,  
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers  
32-A Juhu Lane, Andheri  
Bombay 58.



# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 July



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BIRDS IN OUR JUHU GARDEN

Our family has to thank the birds for a number of thrilling moments in our life. One bird which has given us much pleasure by its looks and 'chatting' has been the Rufousbacked Shrike. Its striking looks made it an exception-ally good bird for starting our children on birdwatching. It is not a shy bird and will imitate and chatter for a long time perched on trees and shrubs just outside our verandah wall. Every year I look forward to its arrival but this year it has not been very evident.

This winter has not been very rewarding for birdwatching in our garden. Perhaps the cold was too prolonged. Only one Paradise Flycatcher visited us and that too only for a day or two. Other years, I have seen three of them flitting among our trees. Other Flycatchers which visit us seasonally are one Fantail Flycatcher, one Verditer Flycatcher, and a pair of Tickell's Blue Flycatchers.

The sunbirds were as active this year as in previous years. They are a wonderful sight to watch as they fly among our drumstick trees with their gleaming purple coloration.

Another species that I wait for every year is the Blackbird. One year four of them were present in our garden. Their call betrays their presence. This year I saw only one Blackbird for a few minutes and so, a few days ago, when I heard a call similar to theirs but harsher I investigated. It was made by another one of our seasonal visitors -- a Whitethroated Ground-thrush.

This particular bird has been noticed by my husband in previous years, but I had never managed to get a good look at it. This year it was pecking away on the ground under our peepal tree for a long time. A few years ago one of these thrushes flew onto a glass window-pane of my friends' house and lay stunned for a while on the ground.

Hocpes have been conspicuous by their absence in our garden this year.

They have given us much pleasure all these years and we did miss their presence.

Another bird conspicuously absent has been the koel. Excepting for a female which was being chased from tree to tree by crows, the koels have been very silent. Their silence is a blessing as their insistent calls do wake us up in the very early hours of the summer mornings just when it is cool.

Golden Orioles have not been as active as before. A countless number of times I have forgotten the food on the stove when I have stood at our kitchen window watching the Orioles and other birds. My family has forgiven me the burnt food as they too have been enthralled by the birds. The Golden Orioles, as many as four some years, with their liquid calls and harsh cries and bright plumage are seasonal arrivals to wait for.

But the greatest thrill of all this year was accorded to me by an Indian Pitta. It was present in our garden for over an hour and I am not satisfied with such a short time of watching it. I hope that it will become one of our regular annual visitors.

There are some birds which do not give me a thrill to have in our garden. House Sparrows are interesting to watch but become a nuisance when building their nests. But they are preferable to House Crows and Jungle Crows. These crows seem to be increasing in their numbers the last few years. Could they be the reason why I have not seen many of my favourite birds this year? If the absence of the call of the koels is a blessing the harsh caw-cawing of the crows is not a welcome substitute. I would rather wake up to the sound of the melodious song of the Magpie-Robins.

(Mrs.) Leela Nilakanta

Juhu beach is about 15 miles north of Bombay City. All the birds mentioned by the author are also found in my garden about a mile and a half away in the interior, except the Whitethroated Groundthrush which I have never seen in or around our garden in Andheri. -- Ed.7

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#### A BIRDWATCHING TRIP TO THE LACCADIVE ISLANDS

About 150 miles west of the coast of Malabar, in the Arabian Sea between 8° and 14° N. and 71° 41' and 74° E. lies the group of coral atolls known as the Laccadives, some 13 of which are inhabited. Tradition assigns the first settlement of the islands to a shipwrecked band of Malayalis who were on their way to bring back King Cheraman Perumal from Mecca in the 9th Century. They speak a primitive form of Malayalam, borrowing freely from Arabic.

Up to about 1830, enormous flocks of terns used to breed on the island Bitrapar. Sir W. Robinson who visited the islands in 1844 was informed that barely 10 years before the islanders had removed 30 to 50,000 eggs in a day. Suddenly for some unknown reason these birds shifted to their present breeding sites at Cherbaniani and Pitti, two uninhabited sandbanks.

Early last year, the Administrator, Shri Murkot Ramunny, offered to take two members of the staff of the Bombay Natural History Society to the islands to explore the potentialities of the island from the point of view of birdbanding. We boarded 'Dhanalaksmi', a cargo ship chartered by the administration on October 16th from Calicut and visited six islands.

16th-17th October : Calicut to Kavrayth: Several flocks of smallish terns and a skua were seen on the 16th but we could not get close enough to identify these. From time to time 3 Wilson's Petrels followed the ship, attracted by a baited line. On the 17th at 10.45 a.m. (about 25 miles east of Kavrayth) a House Martin came on the ship, perched on the derrik for about 5 minutes, and flew off. A solitary whimbrel and a Pond Heron (10-15 miles offshore) were the only other birds we saw be-

fore reaching Kavrathy. Kavrathy is a fertile little island (786 acres) planted with crops like sweet potatoes, beans, yam, etc. A few White-eyes live on the island and we saw the Common Sandpiper, Common Kingfisher, and a Reef Heron on the beach. A flock of swallows were seen a mile offshore.

18th October : Pitti: Described by Hume as the 'southernmost point of an enormous sunken sandbank' Pitti is some 200 x 300 yards in area and stands 6-7 feet above the high water mark. Being uninhabited it is an ideal, natural, sanctuary for sea birds. Philippine Noddies swooped down to within a few feet of our launch as we approached the sandbank. The air was pulsating with the continuous coughing and 'wailing' of the breeding birds. Beaching the countrycraft among the coral reefs and in high surf was a thrilling experience. The islanders accomplished this efficiently and within the next two hours helped us to catch and ring 34 young Crested Terns and Philippine Noddies. The young could not fly and we could pick them after a few minutes of hard chase. A flock of Turnstones flying in graceful formation around the sandbank was a delight to watch.

At the time of our visit, breeding activity was nearly over at Pitti. According to the islanders breeding begins here in May and reaches a peak by July. This is the time when local collectors revel in the plenitude of eggs, making enormous omelettes out of good and partly hatched eggs! The present Administrator has banned all such collection trips.

18th-20th October : Agathy-Chetlat-Bitra: Agathy (688 acres) is thickly planted with coconut and breadfruit trees. We saw White-eyes and koels here, but no crows. We presume that the koels were visitors either from mainland or from Ameni where crows are said to occur. An islander showed us a Turtle Dove, a species which he said was a regular visitor to the island after the monsoon. This bird is considered to be a delicacy here and all good and sensible islanders get busy with their nooses when it comes! Chetlat (255 acres) is planted with coconut trees, and has a beautiful sandy beach frequented by turnstones, little stints, and Kentish Plovers. Twilight on this island has a serene, sublime quality. As night sets in, the lagoon is lit by myriads of luminous sea animals.

Between Chetlat and Bitra (on the 20th morning) an ashy storm petrel came on the ship and was caught by Shri Madhavan. Distinguished at once from the Wilson's Petrel by the absence of any white on the rump, this bird was uniform sooty black throughout and is only the second of its kind to be recorded from our sub-continent. It was in perfect health and we released it with a band. Bitra is the smallest inhabited island (26 acres) we visited, and is a part of a regular atoll. We saw 9 varieties of birds here, including Golden-, Grey-, and Kentish Plovers, the Grey-headed Yellow Wagtail, and the Little Stint, all flitting about on the beach within a few yards of each other. A flock of about 20 Turnstones and another of three Curlews were also seen here. V.C.A. noted a flock of Crab Plovers and a solitary pipit.

21st October : Baliapanni or Cherbaniani: This is a long oval atoll (the northernmost point we had visited in our journey), some 6 x 2½ miles in its extreme dimensions. Even from a distance one is struck by the glittering colour of the sea here. Concentric rings of different shades of green, from light blue-green to vivid and viridian blend to form a real 'gem of ocean' at this atoll. Hundreds of brownwinged and sooty terns swooped down at us. Perhaps the breeding population is segregated specieswise in different islets as the one we visited showed only the brownwinged terns. During our two-hour stay, we ringed 23 young ones. As we handled the chicks, the adults flew low over our heads. We saw a skua here but could not make sure its identity. We returned to Calicut on the 23rd without touching any other island.

In the course of these 6 days, we observed 26 species of birds, 6 of which are additions to the list of birds of Laccadives. Pitti and Baliapanni can be turned into useful bird ringing stations with the help of the administration, but using the inhabited islands of Kavrathy or

Chetlat as base. Besides, these islands offer excellent opportunities for studying the breeding biology of these terns.

Daniel Mathew

and

Vijayakumar Ambedkar

%Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay

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 OCCURRENCE OF THE CHRISTMAS ISLAND FRIGATE BIRD  
FREGATA ANDREWSI MATHEWS AT ERNAKULAM

As there exist only two reports of this bird from Kerala in the last forty and odd years, one from the neighbourhood of Trivandrum and the other from Quilon, the present sight record from Ernakulam may be of interest to the readers of the Newsletter.

On the evening of 23rd May, while sitting out on the verandah of our house, which is close to the Cochin Harbour, a party of Pariah Kites came into view, soaring overhead at a height of about 4-500 ft. I was about to turn away from this rather familiar sight, when it was noticed that one amongst them was slightly different from the rest. Its anterior edge appeared more concave at the neck than in a Pariah Kite and the wings more pointed and angulated. It looked larger in size and had a darker plumage with a broad, white patch flanked by black, running from the breast to the vent, which gave the bird a strange, disembowelled appearance. The underside of the outstretched wings was black -- the same colour as the strips that flanked the white patch on the belly. The breast itself showed as a brown 'necklace' beyond which the chin and beak looked pale. The tail was, however, strikingly similar to that of the Pariah Kite, especially in profile, and with a cleft which was deeper. I had my field glasses handy, the sun was behind/the light good, so, it was possible to get a fair view of the bird, in spite of the fact that it was moving with great speed. All of a sudden, it seemed to hesitate for a moment, then swung round to take a sweeping circle, displaying the black back and cleft tail, and finally continued on its journey on motionless wings, alone, across the heavens and disappeared, a speck on the north-west horizon.

and/

Dr. Salim Ali in his BIRDS OF TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN gives the following field characters for this bird: 'A large sea-bird, glossy black all over, with the exception of the abdomen, which is white in the male. The female is larger, with the white of the underparts extending from upper breast to vent. Wings long and pointed. Tail deeply forked.'

N.G. Pillai

'Belle-Vue', Dewan's Road, Ernakulam

/In this connection reference is made to Mr. Humayun-Abdulali's note in the J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 57(3):667-8, suggesting that there is no authentic record of Fregata andrewsi Mathews from Kerala, and the specimen collected by L.A. Lampard at Quilon and recorded in 1929 in the Society's Journal (Vol. 33:445) is really Fregata minor. -- Ed./

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On my retirement from the Navy in July 1963 and in order to ensure that body and soul continue to keep company I have sold my services to the Gujarat Refinery Project which is engaged in building a public sector Refinery about 10 miles from Baroda on the fertile lands bounded by the villages of Ranoli, Bajwa and Koyali.

I shall go into greater detail regarding the countryside in my next note, but for the purpose of this, it is sufficient to say that the country surrounding our residential colony, known as Northern Township, is dotted with mango topes which are a source of considerable income to the villages in the neighbourhood.

On the morning of April 23rd at 0715 as I and a friend of mine were returning from an early morning 'birding' stroll through the surrounding fields we suddenly saw a large magnificent looking bird flying about 20 feet height inside a mango grove chased by two excited Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatchers (Rhipidura aureola), a fairly common species in this locality. The large bird which settled on the lower bough of a mango tree hardly 8 ft. above ground turned out to be a Crested Hawk-Eagle (Spizaetus cirrhatus) with what looked to me like a small bird in its talons but which my friend thought to be a squirrel. I think it must have been a bird, most probably a Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher, as the other two birds of this species which had been chasing the eagle continued to buzz round the large raptore like a pair of fighter aircraft, and kept peeking at the head and nape of the large bird which seemed to take little notice of all the excitement and concentrated its attention on its prey. The smaller birds were shortly joined by a Black Drongo (Dicrurus adsimilis) which also made a number of swooping attacks but was not observed to make physical contact. However, as all this was going on we were privileged to witness a sight which shall ever remain in our memories as an example of sheer avian gallantry. One of the Flycatchers eventually landed on the back of the eagle and started pecking furiously at its neck and head; it was clearly the action of a bird aroused to desperate measures and we could hardly keep ourselves from voicing our full-throated approval of the proceedings! The same Flycatcher made two attacks in an identical manner before the eagle decided to shift position and took off in a wonderfully graceful slow-winging flight, still hardly 20 ft. from the ground to a distant tree and was lost to sight. The two Flycatchers gave chase for a short distance but soon gave up.

Capt. N.S. Tyabji, I.N. (Retd.)  
Asst. General Manager, Gujarat Refinery  
Project, Baroda, Gujarat.

#### REVIEW

A PICTURE BOOK OF SIKKIM BIRDS. By Salim Ali. pp. 26. 1960. The Govt. of Sikkim

A PICTURE BOOK OF CEYLON BIRDS. Written and illustrated by G.M. Henry. pp. 43. 1953. Dept. of Information, Ceylon

The most expensive part of a bird book is the cost of the coloured plates. These booklets could not have been produced at all but for the fact that the authors and the publishers (Oxford University Press) gave their permission to reproduce the coloured plates originally used for the books.

The illustrations by D.R. Henry, Robert Scholz, Paul Barruel, and C.M. Henry are/ outstanding, as could have been expected. In the Ceylon book there are several illustrations of birds in flight and these are a great aid to identification. Illustrations of harriers, falcons, and eagles are not of much help if they show a sitting bird. Ceylon is only about 30 miles from the Asian Continent and there is evidence that long ago it was joined to India. Therefore most of the birds are either the same or closely related to ours.

Sikkim is a naturalist's paradise. In a country of just 2800 sq. miles over 550 species and subspecies of birds are found, i.e. nearly 27% of the birds found in the Indian subcontinent. Many forms found in Sikkim also exist in far away Kerala. Parallel with vegetation many species of sedentary birds which have their headquarters, as it were, in the humid eastern Himalayas

British amateur naturalists who were in India in the 19th and the early part of this Century have left behind a fund of valuable and engrossing literature about their observations in this country. One remarkable observer was Lieut. Col. D.D. Cunningham the author of "Plagues and Pleasures of Life in Bengal". Residents of Calcutta should be particularly interested in this book for a great portion deals with insect, bird and plant life of that city. The book was published in 1907 by John Murray, London. Everyone who has seen a Bombax malabaricum, or Silk Cotton tree in bloom, will appreciate this description about the bird life on the tree: ..... "A tree in full bloom forms a superb ornament to any landscape, especially when slanting sunlight projects the glowing masses of flowers and the silvery grey bark of the branches and grandly buttressed stem against a background of cloudless blue sky; nothing short of a Japanese drawing of blossoming peach-trees can give any idea of the purity and brilliance of the colouring. The young calyces at first form continuous, purplish brown, polished hoods over the petals and then split above into three convex lobes surrounding the brim of a deep cup. This is so dense and resistant in texture as to form a secure receptacle in which large quantities of fluid, consisting partly of secretions furnished by the flowers and partly of the dew which drains down along the smooth surfaces of the petals, collect to provide stores of a liquor which proves most alluring to many birds and insects and even to some arboreal mammals. Whilst it lies soaking the neighbouring tissues it seems to undergo a certain amount of fermentation, acquiring a faintly acid flavour and, to judge from the behaviour of the birds who partake of it, decidedly intoxicant properties. Its attractions are sure to bring numbers of crows to have a nip before setting out on the day's mischief; mynas of various sorts throng the branches and squabble for the best seats; barbets, bulbuls and orioles look in; king-crows and koils often yield to \*tation join the throng, although it is doubtful whether they do so from a vicious and even love for strong drink or really are vituous birds attracted by the stores of drwned insects which form a deposit in the bottoms of the cups. In addition to all the birds, palm-squirrels join in the revel, darting about from place to place, flirting their feathery grey tails from side to side, and chattering noisily in angry competition for the best places. The ceaseless hubbub and movement, the torrents of different notes, and the frequent squabbling convert the trees into disorderly fairs until the supply of drink has been temporarily exhausted under the continued demands of the toppers and the growing energy of the sunshine; and, during all the time that the debauch goes on, flowers are constantly being broken off to fall in a curiously screwing course and strike the ground with soft thuds."

"The scene is certainly one of the wildest dissipation, but the sense of moral disapprobation excited in an onlooker is tempered by the knowledge that the drinkers are doing something beyond merely enjoying themselves; for there can be no question that they are most efficient agents in securing the cross-fertilisation of the flowers. Should they be watched closely through a strong glass it will be seen that, whilst bending over to thrust their beaks into the lower parts of the cups, the birds constantly smear their crowns with pollen from the anthers, so that, on visiting other blooms, they must almost inevitably transfer some of it to the projecting stigmas. It seems probable that it is only because of the lavish pollination which is effected in this way that the trees are usually able to produce very large crops of fertile fruits in spite of the fact that great numbers of their flowers fall in consequence of the rough way in which the process is conducted."

"These great drinking bouts take place in the early morning when the supply of liquid in the flowers is greatest owing to the dew of the preceding night; but, all throughout the course of the day, casual visitors look in in quest of a drink, and towards sunset there is often a considerable gathering of dissipated birds who regard a nightcap with favour. As the flowers age, and long before they show any signs of fading, their colouring becomes paler than it was at first, and now it is that the anthers mature. The stamens are disposed in two quite distinct groups, one encircling the stylar column, and the other diverging so as to come into close relation to the innersurface of the corolla. In the inner group there are stamens of two distinct forms, the greater number being short and bearing simple



anthers which do not reach to the level of the stigmas, and the rest, five in number, very much larger and with filaments each of which divides into two branches capped by large twisted anthers. When a flower first opens, the five lobes of the stigma are erect and closely applied to one another so as to project above the level of the anthers of the neighbouring great stamens, but they afterwards diverge and curve outwards so that, as the large stamens at the same time grow upwards, the individual stigmatic lobes come to protrude between the filaments. When birds are drinking out of the lower part of the corolline cups, they thrust their beaks down between the two groups of stamens, and, in doing so, dust the tops of their heads with pollen from the anthers of the large ones in the inner group, so that when they go on to another flower they are almost sure to wipe some of it off upon the projecting lobes of the stigma. The flowers are very attractive to many insects, and specially to a great bee with a thorax of bright golden yellow contrasting with the metallic green tints of the abdomen and wings; but it is unlikely that they exert any important influence on the occurrence of pollination, for the space between the two groups of stamens is wide enough to allow of their reaching the lower part of the corolline cup without coming in contact with either of them or the stigmatic surfaces."

"A few weeks later almost all the flowers have fallen, and, at the same time, the trees become clothed in a flush of fresh young leaves and a thick crop of fat green capsules which soon begin to split and discharge their contents. The seeds are embedded in long silky white hairs, tufts of which spread out to form parachutes that drift about through the air, diffusing their burdens abroad, and eventually sinking with them to accumulate in unsightly heaps on lawns, or drift to and fro over the surfaces of ponds. The hairs of which the cotton is composed are smooth, even tubes filled with air, and, although not of a nature to yield good thread, are often used to form the stuffing of cushions and quilts."

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The headlines of newspapers are monopolised by sensational political events and the quiet, but vitally necessary work of nature conservation, and protection of endangered species of life is hardly mentioned. The ORYX, The Journal of the Fauna Preservation Society in its April 1964 issue, reports on the work of many international committees like The Survival Service Commission, The International Union for Conservation of nature and others. Two extracts from this Journal will interest our readers. The one relating to Whooping Cranes is encouraging, but the other relating to Golden Eagles is most disturbing.

#### Increase in the Whooping Crane Flock:

Thirty-three whooping cranes turned up at their traditional wintering grounds in Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas last November, after the 2,500 mile flight from their nesting grounds in the Northwest Territories. This was an increase of five birds in the flock, the only wild flock in the world, for only twentyeight birds left in the spring. More important than the actual numbers is the fact that seven of the thirty-three are young birds of the year. In the previous year no young birds arrived in the north, and this considerable increase gives hope that the whoopers may be able to build up their numbers. Another interesting fact is that when wildlife officials made their customary aerial survey of the cranes' breeding grounds they found only three young birds. Previously their counts have always tallied with the number of birds arriving in Aransas, and because of the size and whiteness of the parent birds, and the open country in which they nest, it is thought very unlikely that they could have been missed on any of the hundreds of square miles surveyed. Is there perhaps another breeding ground to be discovered?



There was an unprecedented drop in the number of pairs of golden eagles rearing young in the Western Highlands of Scotland between 1961-63: 29 per cent as compared with 72 per cent during 1937-60, according to a report on Insecticides and Scottish Golden Eagles, by J.D. Lockie and D.A. Ratcliffe, of the Nature Conservancy, published in 'British Birds'. The nesting failures have included breakage of eggs by the eagles themselves, and the inability of the females to lay eggs. Ten eggs from seven eyries were contaminated with dieldrin, gamma-BHC and DDE. All but one had traces of heptachlor epoxide, and circumstantial evidence strongly suggested that these chlorinated hydrocarbons were responsible for the decline. Apart from the heptachlor, the birds probably get the insecticides from the fat, flesh, and fleece of sheep carrion, the sheep having absorbed them from sheep dips. The authors conclude that the decline is attributable mainly to these residues of chlorinated hydrocarbons, particularly dieldrin, in the adult birds and their eggs. As at least two-thirds of the British breeding population of eagles lives in sheep country, and, if the chemicals continue to be used, is likely to be affected, the population decline may follow that of the peregrine.

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#### REVIEW (Continued from p. 5)

and Indochinese subregion, are found also in Malaya on the one hand and Travancore on the other under more or less identical natural conditions, although separated from their nearest allies, may be by well over a thousand miles of unsuitable country.'

There is no indication on the booklets about their price but both these booklets are well worth possessing.

(Z.F.)

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#### CORRESPONDENCE

##### Selecting suitable binoculars

I have read with great interest the admirable summary by Mr. S.V. Nilakanta on the problems of selecting suitable binoculars. Armed with this advice, I am sure that your subscribers should be able to purchase wisely. There is only one small criticism of magnifications above 9. In this country, a 9 x 35 is a very common specification indeed and 10 x 50 and 12 x 50 are commonly used by observers watching on the shore where a close approach to the birds is not possible. I will agree that such glasses do not focus down to the short distances obtainable with less powerful glasses and are, therefore, rather less convenient for woodlands and forests.

The type of binoculars one purchases should therefore be determined in part by the kind of countryside in which one chiefly intends to work.

Robert Spender

British Trust for Ornithology, Tring, Hertfordshire

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##### Binoculars : Selection of a suitable type

I read S.V. Nilakanta's article on binoculars in the April issue of the Newsletter with much interest, but would like to comment on some of the points made and to add others which may prove helpful.

In order to compare the light transmitting power of various types of binocular, it is useful to know that the theoretical light value of a binocular is the square of the quotient of the diameter of the object glass in millimeters divided by the magnification. Thus, the theoretical light value of an 8 x 30 binocular is  $(30/8)^2 = 16$  approximately and that of a 7 x 50 binocular is  $(50/7)^2 = 49$  approximately. By doing these simple sums in one's head, one can see quickly that the latter binocular has a far higher theoretical light value, that is far greater light transmitting power, a most desirable feature, than the former.

I think it is going a little too far to say that any magnification about 9 is unsuitable. Quite a number of people these days use 10 x 50 binoculars.

cent as compared with 72 per cent during 1957-58, according to a report on Insecticides and Scottish Golden Eagles, by J.D. Lockie and D.A. Ratcliffe, of the Nature Conservancy, published in 'British Birds'. The nesting failures have included breakage of eggs by the eagles themselves, and the inability of the females to lay eggs. Ten eggs from seven eyries were contaminated with dieldrin, gamma-BHC and DDE. All but one had traces of heptachlor epoxide, and circumstantial evidence strongly suggested that these chlorinated hydrocarbons were responsible for the decline. Apart from the heptachlor, the birds probably get the insecticides from the fat, flesh, and fleece of sheep carrion, the sheep having absorbed them from sheep dips. The authors conclude that the decline is attributable mainly to these residues of chlorinated hydrocarbons, particularly dieldrin, in the adult birds and their eggs. As at least two-thirds of the British breeding population of eagles lives in sheep country, and, if the chemicals continue to be used, is likely to be affected, the population decline may follow that of the peregrine.

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##### Binoculars : Selection of a suitable type

I read S.V. Nilakanta's article on binoculars in the April issue of the Newsletter with much interest, but would like to comment on some of the points made and to add others which may prove helpful.

In order to compare the light transmitting power of various types of binocular, it is useful to know that the theoretical light value of a binocular is the square of the quotient of the diameter of the object glass in millimeters divided by the magnification. Thus, the theoretical light value of an 8 x 30 binocular is  $(30/8)^2 = 16$  approximately and that of a 7 x 50 binocular is  $(50/7)^2 = 49$  approximately. By doing these simple sums in one's head, one can see quickly that the latter binocular has a far higher theoretical light value, that is far greater light transmitting power, a most desirable feature, than the former.

I think it is going a little too far to say that any magnification about 9 is unsuitable. Quite a number of people these days use 10 x 50 binoculars. If your hands are steady enough, and you can stand the extra weight during a

whole arduous day in the field, then a 10 x 50 is all right..

I was most surprised to find that in listing what the writer considers to be the only suitable glasses, the two which are, probably, the most widely used today, namely the 8 x 30 and the 9 x 35, are omitted. In my judgment, the best glass for all-round bird watching is, undoubtedly, the 9 x 35, and from personal experience I unhesitatingly recommend the Ross Stepruva (9 x 35).

In addition to the correct magnification and light transmitting power, weight, balance and field view are also very important features. The theoretical light value should never be allowed to fall below 16 approximately (that is 8 x 30 and 9 x 35 are satisfactory) and the distance scanned at 1000 yards should not be less than 120 yards. As to balance, the centre of gravity of the glass should be approximately in the middle of the glass. Glasses such as 7 x 50 and 10 x 50 have long tubes and so not only have their weight to be supported, but they have to be prevented from tipping forwards and downwards out of the hands. This can be very tiring. Centre-spindle focussing is absolutely essential for birdwatching, as is also the facility of being able to focus one eye-piece (usually the right) separately.

With regard to adjusting your binoculars to suit the distance between your eyes, having expanded them to the fullest extent and thus slowly contracted them, the adjustment is correct when the two circular fields of view which are at first seen have become exactly concentric. A mental note should be made of the settings indicated on the binoculars of distance between eye-pieces and of right eye-piece focussing which suit oneself. If the binoculars are passed to another person who alters the settings, one's own can be quickly made again. This can be at times most useful in the field. In fact, it can make all the difference between losing your bird and seeing it.

To buy a cheap binocular is to be nadia payse wise and rupee foolish. Binoculars are one's most important piece of equipment, in fact, one's vade mecum. They will give endless pleasure and with care will last a life time. If a new pair cannot be afforded, then, from a reputable firm, a second-hand pair of good make, which have been thoroughly overhauled, should be purchased. Of the current British makes, in my opinion the best are Ross, Barr and Stroud, and Kershaw — possibly in that order. Of the foreign makes, I have no knowledge, but Zeiss are, of course, a household name. Some of the Japanese glasses I am told are good, but here I would advocate caution.

A simple check which one can apply to a pair of binoculars one is contemplating purchasing is to focus them on some clearly-defined, distant object such as the top of a flagstaff, move them in all directions slowly and see that there is no distortion. As the glasses are swept across the object, in all directions, prismatic (that is 'rainbow') effects, if any, should only be noticeable at the edges.

To sum up, the desiderata in a good pair of binoculars for all-round birdwatching are as follows:

1. Lightness
2. Good balance
3. Correct magnification (6 to 9 and possibly 10)
4. Adequate field of view (at least 120 yards at 1000 yards)
5. Good resolution (that is clarity or definition)
6. Adequate light transmitting power (theoretical light value at least 16 approximately)
7. Reputable make
8. Centre-spindle focussing
9. Right eye-piece adjustment.

Finally, for those about to spend a substantial sum on binoculars, I strongly advise them before doing so to purchase and carefully study a field guide entitled BINOCULARS AND TELESCOPES FOR FIELD USE by J.R. Hebditch. This can be purchased for about R2 from the British Trust for Ornithology, Beech Grove, Tring, Herts., England.

'Strange behaviour of a Grey Partridge chick'

On reading the account entitled 'Strange behaviour of a Grey Partridge Chick' in the Newsletter for June I was reminded of a similar experience that I had many years ago. It was my hobby to keep partridges as pets, so one day I went out to catch a couple of chicks. On seeing a covey with four or five chicks my companions and I got out of the car to catch them. Naturally the parents along with other chicks flew away in different directions, while two chicks crept into a clump of grass and froze there. As we caught one chick the other one flew out and fell into a roadside ditch full of water measuring about 12 feet wide and about 20 feet long. After this we surrounded the chick which kept on swimming, or rather paddling, till it almost got tired and we caught it.

There is nothing strange in this behaviour, for all animals when hard pressed, particularly by Homo sapiens, react in various way in their bid to escape which may seem strange. I have also seen the domestic fowl on more than one occasion paddling in water to save themselves from drowning.

M.K. Himmatsinhji, M.P. (Lok Sabha)  
Jubilee Ground, Bhuj, Kutch

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Whitethroated Groundthrush in Kodaikanal

It was interesting to read your observations of the Whitethroated Ground-thrush in June number of the Newsletter, as this bird is very much in my mind after observing it for the first time in Kodaikanal.

Mr. and Mrs. G. Ross Thomas of Bombay and I spent the month of May with two other friends in a bungalow near a 'shola' on the outskirts of Kodai Town. Early on the morning of the 28th I watched a new bird scratching around in the dry leaves of a ravine. At breakfast we were enchanted to find that it was a female whitethroated groundthrush, which both Salim Ali and Whistler stated to have been found up to 4000 feet elevation. Kodaikanal is about 7000 high. In subsequent discussion with other birdwatchers, I learned that Mr. S.K. Bunker had seen one specimen several years ago at 5000 feet in a 'shola' below Kodaikanal.

On the morning of the 29th Mr. and Mrs. Thomas found a male of the species singing in a tree. On the 30th and 31st I heard him sing, and saw the female, but not the male. The song is a glorious one, combining, as you have said, the calls of many other birds with the thrush's own song. It would seem from the singing and the presence of the pair, that this couple has taken up residence at this unusual altitude. It will be interesting to see if the species becomes permanently established there.

Miss Miriam D. Brown

Singaratope, Ramnad, Madras State.

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The Fantail Flycatcher

Naharsingh's letter on the fearlessness of a Fantail Flycatcher in the May issue of the Newsletter reminds me of a number of instances where birds unmolested by humans have shown singular confidence in them.

I particularly cherish the memory of a Yellow-wattled Lapwing who had laid in a field which was being ploughed in anticipation of the rains. The farmer lad on the job showed us the bird. She simply remained tightly on her eggs as the bullocks approached and the kindly peasant seeing her, had left a small area to her. As though in gratitude, she permitted him to stoop and stroke her on the back. This she let me do as well and I was even allowed to take further liberties and gently pass my hand under her and slowly lift her up. Only when her feet left the ground would she protest and start pecking at my fingers. I got several photographs of her on her eggs and took a couple of her coming onto her eggs after placing her on one side. I also got a close up of her ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ with lens attachments so that only her head appears on the celluloid! Strangely enough, she would not tolerate a hide and I had to abandon the attempt as she grew very wild and it being hot, I feared the eggs might get damaged in the heat. On removing the hide, she became composed.

A pair of Purple Sunbirds allowed a hide within 8 inches of their little perch without any introduction of the structure by stages. They went about their domestic chores without giving the camera eye a second glance though so closely scrutinising them. The shutter clicks went also disregarded.

A hen Rock Bush Quail was equally tolerant of a hide, and in fact she was such a very dull subject, that she had to be animated by poking a stick out from under the hide and with it, pushing her off her eggs. She came on as soon as she was off, and after a few such passes, she got really annoyed and postured aggressively as the end of the stick came close to her, wings and tail spread and all the feathers fluffed as she faced the persistent distractor.

At Abu last June, I had to request a Redvented Bulbul off her nest to be able to count the clutch and on the same day at Anadra Point another bulbul stood over her fledglings after feeding them with my face only a foot away. What impressed me most about Tibet was the tameness of the birds in general and even the Brahminy Ducks would allow an approach of a few yards whereas in India during the winter, they will not trust a person closer than a couple of hundred yards; not a very good commentary on our humane qualities. There, on several occasions, I have watched Alpine Accentors and Robin Accentors feeding vociferous broods in Tibetan Furze clumps at arm's reach while a Horned Lark fearlessly walked up to within 6 inches of my feet to deliver a beakful to her chicks in a feather lined scrape on the ground.

Tailor Birds could care less for man, but even the stoutest heart of an Otocompsan should be expected to miss a beat with a flashlamp going off at three feet, but not so with a pair in our garden! The flash did topple the little lady off her perch, but with dignity she regained her posture and after a moment's reflection proceeded to feed her family. After this both the Tailors behaved like celebrities at press conferences.

What a pity indeed that man's lust to kill should have branded him as an enemy with all the other living things of this Earth. We surely do walk alone where as a little kindness would bring to us so much companionship. That we thirst for this and feel the boycott in the biological world is seen from legends of Shakuntala and St. Francis.

K.S. Lavkumar

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#### Medical aid to wounded birds

I am sure some, at least, of your readers must on occasion have been called upon to render medical aid to wounded birds and wondered what medication they should use.

I have found that the homoeopathic preparation Calendula is most effective, both as an antiseptic as well as a wound healer. Calendula lotion can be obtained at a small price from any homoeopathic dispensary and a solution of, say, 10 drops to an ounce of ordinary tap water should be applied with cotton wool on the wound. This causes the bleeding to subside almost immediately and the wound heals very soon.

My personal experience with Calendula is restricted to its use for humans and birds but presumably it can be equally efficacious for other animals.

N. Latif

Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co. Pvt. Ltd.  
Calcutta

Zafar Futehally  
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OBITUARY

When I first wrote to a few friends to ask for their reaction to my idea of starting a Newsletter for Birdwatchers, the most enthusiastic reply came from Dato Loke Wan Tho, a millionaire industrialist of Singapore. Dato Loke had spent some years in Bombay during the war as an evacuee. In that time he formed a close and tenacious friendship with Salim Ali, and he also developed a passion for bird photography which made him, in a short time, one of the best bird photographers in the world, and certainly the best in Asia. Our readers must be familiar with his pictures which are often seen in magazines, journals, on the B.N.H.S. Calendars, and which were finally published in his book "A Company of Birds". I would like to add that Loke was extraordinarily generous with his pictures; he gave ~~me~~ carte blanche to use them whenever I needed any, with or without acknowledgement. Indeed the effect of his generosity to Indian ornithology, in terms of money, equipment and personal participation, is hard to measure. It is enough to say that for the last 20 years, there had never been any anxiety about the difficulties of putting on an expedition in the field, publishing a bird book or representing India at any International Conference. Even without the formality of sending him a telegram it was known that Loke would finance the project and modestly express his gratitude for being allowed to do so.

Admittedly, we in India knew only one facet of Loke's life. We know him as a first class ornithologist and as an affectionate amusing and witty companion in bird camps who accepted the discomforts of camp life philosophically, sometimes even claiming to develop a fondness for some special inconvenience. Of his other, almost equally important life, as ruler of a vast industrial empire in Malaysia, we know very little. But we can conjecture that the same qualities which made him a great ornithologist, writer, artist, and a very great man, must have also made him a very remarkable businessman who exerted a strong influence for good on the world of commerce and industry in South East Asia.

The air crash which killed him and his wife must be counted as one of the most expensive air crashes in the history of aviation in Asia.

Zafar Futehally.

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# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 August





NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDMATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 8

August 1964

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#### PELICANS BREEDING AT MOONTADAIPPU

During my recent trip to South India in May 1964, when I reached Courtalam, I heard from Mr. R. Natesan and Mr. J.S. Donald about a place named Moontadaippu where, according to them, several hundred birds of different varieties were nesting. After Donald had assured me that the pelican was also nesting there I decided to pay a visit to this pelicanry. Moontadaippu is a village on the Tirunelveli Nagercoil road, about eleven miles from the former place. On May 21, Mr. Natesan kindly arranged transport from Tirunelveli so that I could spend a little time birdwatching at Moontadaippu before proceeding to Nagercoil by bus.

As we approached this place, I saw a large number of Painted Storks and Little Cormorants flying about. I thought Donald had made a mistake about the pelicans when I spotted a solitary Spottedbilled Pelican among the storks and cormorants. Eight tamarind trees stood by the side of the main road and within fifty yards of it, and were so crowded with nests of Painted Storks and Little Cormorants that I could not count the nests. Across the road there were three neem trees which held several more nests of these birds. I found only two Little Egrets' nests in which the birds were sitting closely. The nests of Painted Storks and Little Cormorants held almost full-grown chicks. The noise could be heard several hundred yards away.

Of the Spottedbilled Pelicans' nests I saw only three right on top of a tamarind tree which stood practically on the roadside. The rest of the tree was occupied by nesting Painted Storks and Little Cormorants. One of the nests held a parent which was violently contorting its head and body in the act of 'coughing' up regurgitated food into its pouch while the half-grown chicks were frantically trying to get at the food in the cavernous bill. Once they started feeding it was not possible to see whether all the three chicks were doing so simultaneously.

The second nest held very small fluffy white chicks with reddish eyes. They could be seen from under the sitting parent. A pelican sat so closely in the third nest that I could not make out whether it held eggs or very small young.

As the number of pelicans was so few, one would expect them to have bred at the same time. One wonders why their breeding time was so spaced out.

It was almost mid-day, and the temperature was about 106° F. I saw a Painted Stork and a Little Cormorant spill water over their chicks which they brought in their bill. The nestlings no doubt needed the drenching. The Painted Storks are known to breed almost every month of the year, but Little Cormorants seldom breed outside the rainy season.

I wonder where all these birds go for their food. This colony first came to Moontadaippu only three years ago. Prior to that I was told they were breeding near Ramalingam Tank about five miles away. They were much persecuted there, but are treated with a sense of pride and affection at Moontadaippu. I was told that there is a placard at the bus stand inviting travellers to 'stop, look at our birds then proceed'.

In Vol. 58, No. 2 of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, Miss M.E. Wilkinson writes about Spottedbilled Pelicans nesting at Kundakulam in Tirunelveli District in 1960. Do they still nest there? Or have the last of them come to Moontadaippu?

(Mrs.) Usha Ganguly

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#### OBSERVATIONS ON THE BREEDING OF COMMON BIRDS OF KHANDALA, BOMBAY

In your last edition of June 1964, there is a short note of the early breeding records of coastal Orissa. It is rather curious that the very same thing happened in Khandala (Bombay, W. Ghats) this year. My friend, Mr. Adil Dhash, and I went to Khandala on the 10th of May. To our great surprise we observed that most of the common birds of Khandala were with their young in a rather advanced stage, while others were feeding their young ones out of their nests. The following observations were made:

##### i. Birds feeding their young out of their nests

Pied Bush Chat	Small Minivet
Whitebellied Drongo	Common Bee-eater
Junglefowl	Red Spurfowl
Indian Robin	Roseringed Parakeet
Baybacked Shrike	

##### ii. Birds feeding their young in the nest

Magpie Robin	Malherbe's Goldenbacked Woodpecker
Indian Robin	Pied Bush Chat    Small Green Barbet

iii. Birds seen carrying food for their young

Common Iora	Shama
Indian Jungle Myna	Indian Pipit
Malabar Crested Lark	

The Seven Sisters and the bulbuls were almost all of them off season. A few bulbuls' nests could be seen with eggs which I presume to be the product of a second brood.

It is quite true that all these birds breed in May, but as far as my experience goes, the breeding season in Khandala usually starts around the middle of April or the beginning of May. There are always stray pairs that may go ahead of others or may delay more than others for no apparent reason. Nevertheless, in my opinion, this year the breeding season in Khandala commenced earlier than usual.

Several times we came across the Indian Banded Bay Cuckoo and the Indian Plaintive Cuckoo. That may show us that due to the advanced breeding season they were having a hard time to find a foster nest wherein to lay their eggs.

A. Navarro, S.J.

St. Xavier's College, Bombay

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FOOD REQUIREMENTS OF THE PURPLE SUNBIRD

Once I kept an adult male Purple Sunbird captive for ten days. Immediately after it was caught, while still in my hand, it drank freely from a spoon of honey which was brought to it.

The bird was kept in a cage most of the time, but was occasionally allowed to fly about in the house. It had little fear of human beings and would come and drink honey from a feeder tube held in my hand.

Food for the bird consisted of glucose dissolved in water to which a little milk and a trace of multivitamin syrup had been added. Depending on the concentration of glucose, the bird drank more or less of the syrup. The quantity of glucose consumed per day was 2.9 gram. on the average. This works out to 37 percent. on the body weight of the bird.

While sleeping, the orange shoulder patches of the bird were always visible. If disturbed at night by light being turned on near its cage, the bird would drink some more syrup before going off to sleep again.

A female Sunbird which was brought to me a few days ago weighed 6.7 gm. about one gramme less than the male.

Joseph George

Central Building Research Institute  
Roorkee

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By way of a 'footnote', as it were, may I be allowed to add a few lines to Mrs. Jamal Ara's article entitled 'Some Hints for Birdwatchers', which appeared in the February issue of the Newsletter.

I would like to say a few words about the books which the bird-watcher in India should have, either as sine qua non or as being desirable.

For the beginner, who requires a good introduction to the study of birds, I would recommend, in addition to Fisher's book which Mrs. Ara mentions, a book entitled HOW TO STUDY BIRDS by Stuart Smith and published by Collins. Incidentally, Fisher's book was revised and published as an illustrated edition in 1953 by Collins.

In addition to Salim Ali's THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, which, by the way, has now reached its 6th edition, the same author's INDIAN HILL BIRDS is essential for those living in the hills or who visit them on holidays. The former is published by that splendid organisation the Bombay Natural History Society, 91 Walkeshwar Road, Bombay 6-WB., and the latter by the Oxford University Press. The value of these two excellent books is much enhanced if one combines with them Hugh Whistler's grand book THE POPULAR HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS. The prospective purchaser should try and obtain the 4th, and latest, edition which constitutes a complete revision and enlargement of the work by the late Sir Norman Kinnear, lately of the British Natural History Museum. Through the generosity of a number of benefactors of Indian ornithology, the book can be purchased at a very moderate price. The publishers are Gurney and Jackson.

Birdwatchers in Maha Gujarat are thrice blessed by having that trilogy on the birds of their area: THE BIRDS OF KUTCH by Salim Ali, Oxford University Press; THE BIRDS OF GUJARAT by Salim Ali, Gujarat Research Society (46-48, Esplanade Mansion, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 1); and THE BIRDS OF SAURASHTRA by R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji. This last book was published privately by the author. Until quite recently copies could, and possibly still can, be obtained from the palace (Dil Bahar) at Bhavnagar, Saurashtra. This is a sumptuous work and most authoritatively written.

Birdwatchers in Burma are well-served by the BIRDS OF BURMA by Smythies, published by Oliver and Boyd, and those in Ceylon by A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF CEYLON by G.M. Henry, Oxford University Press. Both these books are generously illustrated with good coloured plates and would prove most useful to birdwatchers in India generally, but more particularly to those living in geographical propinquity to those countries.

Those living in the south-western corner of peninsular India or the eastern end of the Himalayas should quickly put themselves in possession, respectively; of THE BIRDS OF TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN and THE BIRDS OF SIKKIM, both by Salim Ali and both published by the Oxford University Press. These are well-illustrated, excellent works of reference. This particular combination of author and publisher makes that inevitable. For those living at the other end of the Himalayan chain; there is the BREEDING BIRDS OF KASHMIR by Bates and Lowther, Oxford University Press. Though somewhat limited in scope, this is a good book and is very liberally illustrated with black and white photographs. This is only to be expected as the authors were both very keen, experienced bird photographers.

The advanced birdwatcher who takes the subject seriously and the professional ornithologist, neglect at their peril such works by Stuart Baker as the 2nd edition of the eight volumes on Birds in the FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA series and THE NIDIFICATION OF BIRDS OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE. Although the former work is now more than forty years old, it still remains the standard work on the subject. It will, however, be superseded within the next few years by a HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, which is at present projected by those two eminent authorities: Dr. Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. All who are interested in Indian birds are looking forward to the emergence of this work with eager expectancy. With the bird volumes in the FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA Series, one must, of course couple S. Dillon Ripley's A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, recently published by the Bombay Natural History Society. In fact, the latter is, in a sense, complementary to the former, in that it brings it up to date in respect of nomenclature, taxonomy and distribution.

I trust that I have not bored our readership, but that, on the contrary, they may have found these notes at once interesting and informative, and may even are, perhaps on some future occasion, to browse with me among the more esoteric and elegant tomes which have been devoted to India's glorious avifauna.

S.K. Reeves

Ashted, Surrey, U.K.

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#### LARINGS WETTING THEIR BREAST

Both in 1963 and 1964 we have repeatedly seen both individuals of incubating pairs of yellow wattled lapwings (Vanellus malabaricus) wetting their breasts and bellies in standing water before relieving their mates on the nests (partially accepted for publication).

Have any other birdwatchers seen similar uses of water to cool either eggs or chicks?

Can anyone help us with references to published accounts of such behaviour? We know the following:

Marchant, S. (1961): Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl. 81:134-141  
----- (1962): ibid. 82:123-124

summarising and adding to the information on Pterocles sp. including the Meade-Waldo, Stuart Baker, and Meinertzhagen references;

Abdulali, Humayun (1939): J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 41:433-4,  
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Lowther, E.H.N. (1949): A BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER IN INDIA

recording similar behaviour in terns;

Serle, W. (1939): Ibis : 669,

recording in Xiphidiopterus albiceps, a west African lapwing, behaviour very similar to that we observed.

We would be immensely grateful to any of your readers if they could inform us of any other accounts which they may encounter.  
S. N. Javakar and H. Spurway

The advanced birdwatcher who takes the subject seriously and the professional ornithologist, neglect at their peril such works by Stuart Baker as the 2nd edition of the eight volumes on Birds in the FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA series and THE NIDIFICATION OF BIRDS OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE. Although the former work is now more than forty years old, it still remains the standard work on the subject. It will, however, be superseded within the next few years by a HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, which is at present projected by those two eminent authorities: Dr. Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. All who are interested in Indian birds are looking forward to the emergence of this work with eager expectancy. With the bird volumes in the FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA Series, one must, of course couple S. Dillon Ripley's A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, recently published by the Bombay Natural History Society. In fact, the latter is, in a sense, complementary to the former, in that it brings it up to date in respect of nomenclature, taxonomy and distribution.

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S.K. Reeves

Ashted, Surrey, U.K.

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S.D. Jayakar and H. Spurway  
 Genetics & Biometry Laboratory, Govt. of Orissa  
 Bhubaneswar 3, Orissa

THE GEESE FLY HIGH. By Florence Page Jaques. Illustrated by Francis Lee Jaques. pp. 102. Univ. of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. \$4.50.

This husband and wife team have produced several books together. He does the pictures and she writes the narrative which strings them together. The present volume is a new edition of a description, in terms of geese, of a journey from Minnesota to Louisiana, along the same route, more or less, as the ducks and geese take in travelling to their winter home.

The black and white drawings of Mr. Jaques are completely delightful. The several full-page illustrations as well as the many smaller sketches which are lavishly strewn over nearly every page make this a book to be enjoyed visually rather than read with care. The written text in fact, detracts from rather than adds to the merit of the whole book. It is gossipy, personal, and the reverse of scintillating. Most of it is made up of conversations between husband and wife.

'Those fool coots again.' Lee muttered.

'I don't see why people scorn coots' I protested . . .

'You shouldn't laugh out loud when you're hunting', Lee told me severely . . . and so on.

The advantage of all this chattering is that it gives the husband more pages to illustrate.

Z.F.

#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

In June 1964 issue of Farm and Country Dr. E.A.R. Enion the well-known writer and illustrator of birds reviews an article recently published in Ibis about the feeding habits of pigeons. A study was made by three research officers of the Ministry of Agriculture over a period of five years and in an area of 1750 acres. The birds studied were the Large Wood Pigeon, the Stock Dove, and the Turtle Dove. The Turtle Dove is an emigrant to England and resides there between May and September. It breeds in Europe, northern Africa and southwestern and southern Asia east to Siberia, Sakhalin, and Japan; wintering in the Mediterranean area, northeastern Africa and southern Asia.

During the study it was found that the birds were actually feeding from 50% to 98% of the period of observation. 75,000 Wood Pigeons were actually recorded in this way and the crop contents of more than 600 birds shot in the area were analysed. This analysis tallied closely with visual observations.

This study confirmed the theory of G.F. Gause that when several species of birds feed in the same area they are separated ecologically; otherwise the most successful would displace the others. In this case it was found that the Turtle Dove eats small seeds of weeds and fumitory. It is therefore completely beneficial from the farmer's point of view. The Wood Pigeons eat grain, clover and brassica leaves. Hence they are the farmer's enemy. The Stock Dove is an assiduous gleaner of shed corn, weed seeds, and its status is therefore more or less neutral as far as agriculture is concerned.

This is the type of study that should be undertaken in respect of many of our Indian birds. \*

Chaturvedi Prize for article on Birds

We would like to congratulate Mr. Joseph George for having received this prize which is given for the best article on wild life published in the Indian Forester. The article 'Bird Counting' by Joseph George was reproduced in our Newsletter in November 1961.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Whitechecked Bulbul in South India

On October 17, 1955, I was travelling by bus on the road from Sernadevi towards Kalakadu in Tirunelveli District, when I saw a bird I had never seen before fly away from a cactus hedge bordering the road, as the bus went past. Travelling by bus is not the best situation for bird observation, I admit, but I could see this one quite clearly. It was a typical bulbul in appearance, but the most noticeable thing about it was the orangy yellow under the tail instead of the familiar red of our Redvented Bulbul. It also had white cheeks.

When I reached home I was delighted to find a picture just like it in THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS by Dr. Salim Ali, p.35 -- The Whitechecked Bulbul. The letterpress mentions a crest, which I did not notice, but says that this varies and that there may be 'almost none, as in the illustration'. The only snag is that the distribution is said to be 'south to Bombay and east to Jhansi', and the place that I saw it was only about 40 to 50 miles from Cape Comorin!

I should like to think that my identification of this jaunty little bird was correct and that I had seen a rare visitor! I wonder if any one else has reported seeing it further south than Bombay.

I would like to express my appreciation of the Newsletter.

(Miss) Beatrice M. Taylor  
Dohnavur Fellowship  
Dohnavur, Tirunelveli Dt.

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Birds seen during a South Indian tour

I have seen at least forty new species during this southern tour, most of them at Thekkadi. I met Mr. K.K. Neelakantan and we spent a morning birdwatching. At one place I found three Spottedbilled Pelicans nesting, together with Painted Storks and Little Cormorants.

All together this was a very happy tour for me.

(Mrs.) Usha Ganguli  
17.vi.1964

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A Southern Spotted Owlet (Athene brama) attacked by Crows

On 24 April, early in the morning, I saw in a glimpse, among half a dozen clamouring crows, one jungle crow catching a bird in the air, about 10 ft. from the ground. In the next moment the catcher and the caught reached the ground in a knot. I rushed to the spot anticipating the sight of a helpless Pied Crested Cuckoo (Clamator jacobinus) but to my surprise saw an all together different bird -- an owlet. On my approach, the crow moved to a respectful distance. Squatting near the bird, I watched all over its body, but I could not see any mark of injury. The bird was staring at me right in my face. Hardly had two minutes passed, when the bird again rose on its wings and flew through tangles of boughs and twigs of a peepal tree and a mango sapling.

As soon as I reached my room my brother jubilantly told me that he caught an owlet and kept it in a cage. He hurriedly went in and brought the cage to show me. Most likely it must be the same bird I encountered a little while ago. Swoon or sleep it was in, I do not know, it was lying with its eyes closed, or perhaps was it simply taking rest?

I kept the cage in a corner, away from light and the possible disturbance from children. Yet it was children that first crowded to see it, then elders came and disapprovingly nodded their heads. A mother of an infant also hearing the news came to see it and feared out of her wits what unhappy tidings this bird of night might have brought for her infant. Fully understanding the apprehensions of the elders, I consoled one and all that I would keep the bird only for the day and would let it off at night, so that it would be safe from tormenting crows.

On that day luckily we managed to kill a rat and offered to it, hoping to see how it would tear at it. Surprisingly enough, in the face of this 'tempting' food the bird showed complete indifference. Now I began to doubt if it was suffering from some internal injury causing it discomfort and pain, as owlets are neither quite blind nor completely inactive during day time.

In the evening, to have a better view of the owlet and to release it afterwards, I took the bird out of the cage. Sometimes it opened its eyes partly, sometimes fully. At one instance, I remember well, it opened one eye fully, while the other completely closed! It was also interesting to observe how quickly its iris dilated and contracted according to the intensity of light rays passing through its pupils. I stroked its head fondly, which resembled kitten's, and it seemingly enjoyed my fondling, blissfully closing its eyes as your pet cat would do. Yet the most impressive thing I noticed all along was its not showing desire to escape or any sign of fear. To be brief it was completely at home or at least so appeared. It was fluffy, and its feathers soft and smooth. I let him fly away at about 7 p.m.

T.V. Jose

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Brownheaded Storkbilled Kingfisher

While chasing the elusive and cunning dacoits in the forests and the ravines of this district of Morena one does get the opportunity of observing the bird life. However, the policeman's observations under the circumstances are hurried and not detailed, for he moves, not alone, but with his men making extensive and rapid searches of the suspected areas.

Recently while searching such areas we rested on the bank of a beautiful stream where game abounded and in the afternoon chee-tal were observed coming down in large numbers to quench their thirst. The stream with high and denuded banks flowed through a thick stretch of jungle. There I was surprised to find that the stream was inhabited by only one kind of kingfisher, the Brownheaded Storkbilled, Pelargopsis capensis. I failed to observe any other kingfisher; of this mentioned species there were several, the whole bank of the stream ranged with their loud calls. The bird was either observed perched in the overhanging jamun bushes or changing perches and while doing so never failing to emit its unmistakable loud laugh.

I have passed several such jungle streams but had never come across the bird. This isolated colony quite interested me. This stream forms the boundary between the Kota District of Rajasthan and Morena District of Madhya Pradesh.

Shri Pratap Singh  
A.S. Police, Morena, M.P.

\* \* \* \*

#### Some observations on the House Sparrow

Nests of House Sparrows are built at places of varied selection. Once in a large empty cardboard box on the loft of the room during monsoon. Another observed in summer in a space formed by a Y-shaped cement pipe of waste water along the walls of the building. Third in the gum boots during winter and yet another under the window shutter. In the last case it was observed that a pair of sparrows took 8-10 days for completing their nest.

In all the cases except one there were four eggs in the nests. In ~~one~~ one case three young ones were found in the nest. Eggs were of the size 2.2 x 1.6 cm. with shell greyish and spotted black. The nests have usually two parts -- one consisting of loose material forming a base, and the other a compact woven part. This compact part (actual nest) weighs about 100 gm. Hollowed area of the nest is almost circular with an opening on the top. Roughly, the volume of this space is 525 c.c. accommodating four eggs and further the young ones.

In two cases where the nests were built outside the room they were quite exposed and eggs naturally lay at the mercy of the crows. Perhaps for reasons of protection the sparrows select places inside and around the houses for nest building.

For protecting the eggs from crows the nests were removed and kept in a wooden box covered from above with wire netting having a small entrance. This box was, of course, replaced on the same original place of the nest. Sparrows were observed entering the nests quite often for 2-3 days, after which they stopped. In both the cases the eggs remained unhatched. Can it be because the nests were touched, that the sparrows neglected the eggs?

A.K. Joshee

\* \* \* \*

Frigate Birds

With reference to Mr. N.G. Pillai's note on p. 4 of the Newsletter for July 1964 recording a frigate bird at Ernakulam, Kerala, to my mind the colour pattern of the underside -- white patch on belly flanked with black producing 'a strange disembowelled appearance' -- is aptly suggestive of the Lesser Frigate Bird (Fregata minor) and not of the Christmas Island species F. andrewsi. Thus it must be emphasized again that up to date no authentic record of the latter in Indian waters exists.

A key to the 3 species included in Ripley's SYNOPSIS, prepared for our projected HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, is as under.

- A. Upper parts uniformly dark except for white band  
across hindneck . . . . . 1
- B. Upper parts uniformly dark; no white band across  
hindneck . . . . . 2
- C. Head, neck, and underparts white or rusty white; rest  
of upperparts dark. Brown or rusty markings of neck  
sometimes becoming darker and forming broad band  
across chest . . . . . Juvenile plumage of all 3 species
1. Throat black; breast and abdomen white ..... Fregata andrewsi  
♀
- Throat black, breast white, abdomen black .. Fregata ariel ♀
2. Underparts uniformly dark ..... Fregata minor ♂
- Underparts not uniformly black ..... a
- a. Throat, breast, and abdomen black; flanks  
white ..... Fregata ariel ♂
- Throat whitish, breast white, abdomen  
black ..... Fregata minor ♀
- Throat black, breast black, abdomen white.. Fregata andrewsi  
♂

Sálin Ali

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# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 September



NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDBATCHERS

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NOTES ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE PEAFOWL

While studying the habits of the big game animals<sup>1</sup> in the Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh, I saw peafowl (Pavo cristatus) daily and took casual notes on their behaviour. Although my data include only seven months of observation, from December 20 1963 to July 20 1964, the period covers the major part of the breeding cycle of the peafowl, and the notes may thus be of interest for comparison with other areas in India.

Kanha National Park, 122 square miles in size, lies at an altitude of 1750 to 2900 feet in the Central Indian highlands at 22° 15' N. latitude and 80° 35' E. longitude. The main park area consists of a broad valley surrounded by hills on three sides. Extensive sal (Shorea robusta) forests are found in the low-lying portions of the park, and mixed forest covers the hills. Peafowl occur throughout the park, but my observations are confined to a large grass meadow near Kanha village.

<sup>1</sup> This research is being carried out under the auspices of the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Medical Research and Training, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Peafowl remained inconspicuous until mid-January. The sexes were usually separated, both hens and cocks being found singly and in flocks of two to four individuals each. Most cocks were in full breeding plumage by the beginning of the year, but in a few the upper tail coverts had not yet grown to their full length. There were also some cocks, presumably subadult, which had the iridescent blue neck and chest yet lacked the elongated upper tail coverts. Such birds tended to stay in the company of hens.

Cocks suddenly became prominent in the middle of January as they wandered around on the open meadow, especially in those areas where the grass had been burned earlier in the month. Several cocks called loudly for the first time on January 16, an activity which marked the beginning of the breeding season. The most conspicuous behaviour of the cocks in the following months consisted first of establishing a territory and then of courting the hens.

Establishing of territory. After an initial period of wandering, each adult cock chose by late January or early February a certain limited area, roughly 400 to 600 feet in diameter, that represented his exclusive territory from which other adult cocks were apparently excluded. Since most cocks favoured territories with one side bordering the forest and another side touching the territory of a neighbouring cock, there were marked concentrations of birds in some parts of the meadow and almost none in other parts. Within his territory each cock had a small area, often only about 50 feet in diameter, with the following attributions: 1) a prominent place, like a rock or termite mound, on which to stand, 2) a tree providing shade and a roost for the night; and 3) an open area, such as a road or patch of short grass, on which to court. Cocks spent much of the day within this small area, often giving their raucous, two-toned scream with which they appeared to proclaim their territory to other males and perhaps to advertise their presence to distant hens. Calls were given throughout the day and sometimes at night at the height of the breeding season, and a call by one cock frequently brought a response from all others in the vicinity.

Occasionally two cocks met at the boundary of their territory. At such times they walked slowly parallel to each other and about five feet apart until suddenly one or the other turned away at a 90° angle, swinging his long tail abruptly toward the opponent. This seemed to be an intimidation display. Once two cocks were seen to fight by jumping at each other with slashing feet.

Courting. While the cocks remained in their territories, the hens travelled around in flocks of two to ten individuals each. If such a flock entered the territory of a cock, he advertised his presence with a characteristic display. He dashed back and forth on his courting area with chest thrown out and with head and neck bobbing up and down, all the while emitting a call that began with a trumpet-like honk and was followed by a series of nasal ca-ca-ca-a-a. As often as not the hens ignored him and drifted into the territory of another cock which then displayed in a similar manner. These observations indicate that the cock does not possess a harem of hens, as has often been stated, but that he courts any transitory flock that enters his territory.

If the hens approach a cock to within 80 feet or less, he displays his well-known courtship dance. He minces towards the hens with rapidly treading feet and with tail fanned out, then slowly revolves before them with lowered wings quivering violently, showing off the rusty-brown primaries and grey-barred

scapulars, only to turn away, still treading and quivering, to reveal his greyish under tail coverts and black rump surmounted by the white radiating shafts of his fanned tail feathers. Occasionally the hens then too displayed like the cock; pirouetting in front of him with quivering wings, spread tail, and treading feet.

As one peahen left the forest in the direction of a cock and several hens that were displaying to each other, a crested hawk-eagle (Spizaetus cirrhatus) landed on her back. She squawked loudly and ran into a patch of grass where she cowered. However, the hawk-eagle once more attacked her back, rolled off when she jumped ahead, then tried to follow her on foot. Both entered some high grass and after a brief shuffle all was silent. Five minutes later the hawk-eagle emerged and flew into a tree. I checked the site and found the peahen dead, talons having punctured both sides of her body. Five minutes later the raptor returned to his kill and fed for 50 minutes on the head and neck. The other peafowl, 300 feet away, ceased to display and sought cover at the beginning of the attack.

The first courtship display of the season was seen on January 31, and the peak of the activity occurred between mid-February and mid-March, the spring time at Kanha when temperatures were in transition from cool January to hot April. Some cocks abandoned their territories in early April, but others retained theirs until the middle of the month. Cocks sometimes courted hens after having left their territory. The last courtship display of the season was seen on June 21, the day after the monsoon began, but a few birds were still calling intermittently in the latter part of July.

Courting behaviour occurred in atypical situations in a few instances. Both adult and subadult cocks sometimes displayed to each other. One cock courted a chital deer (Axix axis). On March 28, four hens inadvertently approached the nest of a stone curlew (Burhinus oedionemus). The incubating curlew left its nest and advanced on the peahens with its stubby tail in a fan and with wings extended laterally -- a distraction display designed to lure the intruders from the vicinity of the nest. One peahen, apparently stimulated by the resemblance of the distraction display of the curlew to the courtship display of the peacock, responded by dancing.

Many peafowl withdrew into the forest in May after calling and courting had essentially ceased. The first moulted tail feather of a cock was found on June 6, and a week later shed feathers were common. However, some cocks still had the upper tail coverts in late July. The first young of the season were seen on June 5, and on June 8 a shallow scrape with two newly hatched chicks and two pipped eggs was discovered.

George B. Schaller,  
Kanha, M. P.

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#### ARRIVAL OF COMMON SWALLOWS IN BHUBANESWAR

We were surprised on 7 July of this year to see a swallow flying in the residential area of New Capital, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, but were too slow on the draw to check its species. Common Swallows (Hirundo rustica) are seen here regularly during winter and spring, but we had not seen any since May 9, nor have we ever seen any other species in or around Bhubaneswar. On July 19, two undoubted H. rustica were seen flying over our garden for a long



time. They were seen on July 20 both in the same garden and over a pond on the Bhubaneswar - Cuttack section of National Highway 5. On July 23, they were flying over a small lake near the Biological Park at Barang south of Cuttack. One of the individuals seen on July 20 had both its rump and its black very pale and shabby.

Authorities differ greatly over when these swallows reach India during their southward migration. Salim Ali (THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, 6th ed.) states that their arrival starts in September-October and that they leave in April-May, and Whistler (POPULAR HANDBOOK) states only that it occurs in winter. However, for Burma, Smythies in his BIRDS OF BURMA states that 'the sub-species gutturialis may be seen in every month of the year, but there is a great diminution of numbers in June.' Apparently, 'the first arrivals in July are adults that have finished breeding very early; whereas the juveniles, which arrive rather later -- may not leave -- until June'. Meinertzhagen's BIRDS OF ARABIA states that 'in the Middle East, autumn passage commences in late July'.

Perhaps this newsletter can collect arrival and departure dates for various migrants all over India which, linked up, will provide more information on their movements.

S.D. Jayakar and H. Spurway

Genetics and Biometry Laboratory,  
Govt. of Orissa, Bhubaneswar 3.

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#### A NOTE ON THE STONE CURLEW IN BRITAIN

The other day when motoring back to London from Norfolk, my friends and I stopped just a mile or two on the London side of Thetford, in the Suffolk Brecklands, to see if any Stone Curlew (Burhinus oedichenus oedichenus) were to be found at a favourite spot of theirs and where there is a small breeding colony.

We were not disappointed, for a short walk was rewarded by the sight of our first wary bird, standing on a footpath and eyeing us suspiciously. A few more cautious steps was more than the bird would permit, and it soon ran down the pathway away from us for a short distance and then turned off into some cover.

A moment or two later, another bird, same distance away, flew up out of the shore heather and made a long flight away from us and eventually dropped down out of sight.

By now the first bird and the other hidden members of the party, about seven or eight all together, had become alarmed and took to wing, calling loudly and frequently. It was delightful to hear their plaintive, wailing calls -- coor-lee-coor-lee-coor-lee dinning away in the stillness of a summer evening, as the birds disappeared in the far distance.

Whilst the birds were on the wing, we noticed most of the diagnostic features, including the whitish, double wing-bar. We observed that one bird stayed behind and seemed noticeably attached to one particular spot. It may well have been at its nest site, for all together it was a little late in the season, the bird is occasionally double-brooded.

Although the Stone Curlew, in the two forms of saharae and indi-

cus, is a common bird in dry, stony areas throughout the Indian sub-region, I wonder how many of our readers know that the bird is also found in Britain?

With us, it is mainly a summer visitor from March to October or November, breeding patchily and in small numbers in SE. England, south of a line from the Wash to Dorset. Elsewhere it is a vagrant. The bird occasionally winters in SW. England and elsewhere.

S.K. Reeves

18, Eastwick Drive, Gt. Bookham  
Surrey, England

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MORE ABOUT THE GREEN BARBET  
MEGALAIMA VIRIDIS

The Green Barbets of my note in the Newsletter for April 1964, were found brooding from 7.3.1964. They were first noted bringing food for the young on 29.3.64. Feeding in the nest went on till the 27th of April -- for 29 days. On the 27th of April before 8.8 a.m. the adults came at least six times to feed the young. The food consisted of the fruit of a variety of Muntingia of the mulberry, and, apparently, of pieces of half-ripe mango.

The last time an adult came and fed the young was at 8.7 a.m. A nestling, in its greed, thrust half its body out of the nest. The parent flew off after feeding this nestling. At 8.8, without any preliminaries whatsoever, this nestling slipped out of the nest and flew a distance of 40 feet before alighting on a mango branch. Having spent a number of mornings in the hope of seeing the young ones leaving the nest, and having pictured to myself something rather dramatic, I was surprised and rather disappointed at the casual manner in which the young ventured into the world. I had expected the adult to entice the young by tantalisingly holding out food or to coax them with some special call-notes to desert the cosy nest. But nothing even remotely like that happened. The adults were not there to scold or to encourage. The fledgeling showed no fear or hesitation.

There was only one young. After waiting for a while to make sure that the nest was indeed empty, I left. But, at 8.23, on going to the observation post I found a bird looking out of the nest with a red berry in its beak. A little later it flew off, the food still in its mouth. At 8.30 a bird came to the tree, stopped for a minute or two, and flew off without approaching the hole. At 8.46 and again at 8.52 a bird with a red fruit in its bill came to the tree and flew off without so much as looking at the hole. Thereafter, I think the visits were not repeated.

I believe that the bird which brought food to the empty nest was the parent which had been far away when the fledgeling left the nest. (The other parent which had fed the young at 8.7 had been on the tree to which the young first flew, and had flown off accompanied by the fledgeling.) Its urge to feed the young probably persisted because it had not seen the emergence of the young.

To pass from conjecture to facts, that evening, at 6.15, there was a barbet in the hole, looking out. As the light was not very good I could not say whether it was an adult or the juvenile. It flew off a few seconds later. At 6.45 a barbet (what wouldn't I have given to be able to tell one from the other of the three -- or more? -- birds involved!) flew down and entered the hole.

: 6 :

I waited till it grew dark, and am quite certain that the bird spent the night in the hole.

The next evening (28th April), a barbet went into the hole at 6.3. At 6.5 a second barbet came, sat on a branch close to the hole, and then flew past the entrance, almost brushing it. At 6.7 the bird in the hole came out and flew off. At 6.34 a barbet again went into the hole. Four minutes later another called close by, and the bird in the hole at once jumped out, sat for a few seconds on the branch which served as an approach to the hole and flew off. At 6.41 a barbet alighted on a branch six feet away from the hole. At once another flew down to the same branch from a neighbouring tree and I heard the kworr-kworr-kworr notes which indicate a tiff. I do not know how it happened, but, one of the barbets had meanwhile slipped into the hole. At 6.43 one flew to the entrance and clung there while the other hopped out and flew off.

Something very like this was repeated the next evening also. One bird went into the hole at 6.36. Four minutes later another came and alighted on the branch a foot away from the mouth of the hole. The first one hopped out and both sat on the same branch, 10 to 12 inches apart, without showing any animosity. A minute later the first one flew off and the new-comer entered the hole and remained for the night.

For the next three days I could not watch the roosting. On 3rd May no bird turned up. I watched on the 4th and the 5th also and made certain that the barbet was no longer roosting in the hole. Then, just as a casual check, I watched the hole on the 16th, the 25th and the 26th, but no bird came near the hole.

On June 16th I thought that there was something unusual in the behaviour of the barbets which, as usual, came late in the evening to a tall mango tree near the roost-tree. At 6.30 a barbet flew down, sat near the hole for a few seconds, and went in. For a long time it did not settle down, but went on peeping out. At 6.51 it jumped out, but returned to the hole a minute later. I waited till 7.00, but the bird made no further move. From the 16th of June till the 29th I watched the bird going to roost in the hole. It is still regularly using the roost. Neither on the 16th nor on any subsequent date did any rival show up.

### Summary

Barbets seen first quarrelling for possession of the hole: 11.2.64  
" " definitely brooding .....: 7.3.64  
" " feeding young in nest .....: 29.3.64

Fledgeling left nest .....: 24.4.64

Bird roosted in deserted nest (3 days) .....: 27, 28, 29.4.64  
one bird replacing another which occupied hole first.

Barbets did not use hole (so far as could be ascertained) from  
3rd May to 16th June.

Hole again in regular use as roost from 16 June to this date  
15.7.1964

These days no barbet seen going near hole between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

It is known that woodpeckers (one of the breeding pair) roost in the newly made nest as soon as it is large enough to do so. I have myself noted that the male Goldenbacked Woodpecker roosts in the nest until the eggs are laid. The barbet too may have this habit. But why did two birds quarrel for the privilege of roosting in the nest? Nothing like this was noticed among wood-

peckers. Why did two birds dispute, though very feebly, for possession of the hole after the young had flown?

K.K. Neelakantan,  
Ernakulam

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# INDIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL GARDEN (BIRD ZOO)

There are so many zoological gardens where all classes of the animal kingdom -- mammals, aves, reptiles, pisces, and amphibia -- are displayed. There are no zoos where one will see only birds. It may not be possible, or even desirable for zoos to concentrate specially on bird collection alone. Zoos, in general, aim at an equitable display of all classes of animal kingdom. 'I am desirous that we should have in our country a zoo specially devoted for the display and study of birds' -- this has been the cherished desire of Shri Gianchand Jain, one of the important industrialists in India. It is indeed a magnanimous thought which is bound to create more interest in bird lore.

Shri Gianchand Jain has been a very keen birdwatcher since his childhood, and he has travelled widely in search of birds. He developed a hobby of collecting very colourful and attractive birds from different parts of the world. He built series of aviaries in his garden in Dhrangadhra (100 miles NW. of Ahmedabad), a former princely state in the Gujarat State. Many bird-watchers and bird lovers started pouring in to see his collection, and I happened to be one of those fortunate visitors in May 1963. I saw for the first time the Turquoise Parakeet (Neophema pulchella) which is reported to be practically extinct in their natural haunts in Australia. A pair of Chukor Partridges in captivity with a brood of chicks. (the breeding of Chukor Partridges - Alectoris gracea - in captivity is rather considered difficult), 2 or 3 nests of the Cuckoo (Nymphicus holandicus) with eggs and young -- provided me very much to stay and enjoy the birds for a longer time. The collection, even at that time was full of promise: I thought this could be systematically organized to present one of the biggest bird collection in a zoo atmosphere.

Shri Gianchand Jain's enthusiasm knows no bounds. His ambition to possess at least 4000 species of birds is really sky high. I do not think any individual collection, in any part of the world can boast of more than 2000 species. A fruitful conversation with this ardent bird lover yielded quick results. We found that both of our ideals were coinciding. At the request of Shri Gianchand Jain I agreed to take up the challenge of his desire to create something unique connected with the study and display of living birds. I took charge of Shri Gianchand's collection of living birds in August 1963, when its status was 6 orders, 17 families, 105 species or kinds and 343 specimens. We began to concentrate more in collecting as many rare species of Indian birds as possible and we are proud to say that within a year we have improved the status of our collection to 12 orders, 40 families, 238 species or kinds and 735 specimens. The following statement gives a fair indication of the status of our collection.

Orders	Families	No. of species or forms	No. of Specimens
1. Passeriformes	21	108	310
2. Piciformes	2	8	21
3. Coraciiformes	3	4	9
4. Cuculiformes	2	2	5
5. Psittaciformes	1	49	158
6. Columbiformes	2	19	77
7. Charadriiformes	1	2	3
8. Gruiformes	3	3	8
9. Galliformes	1	33	119
10. Falconiformes	2	3	3
11. Anseriformes	1	5	17
12. Ciconiformes	1	2	5
	40	238	735

There has been a consistent demand from the public to see our collection. We celebrated the 8th wild life week in October 1963 and declared our bird zoo open to the public free of charge and since then about 22,000 people had visited the bird zoo within 3 months and up till now say about 47,000 people had visited. This shows the great amount of interest people have in a remote place like this, for seeing the birds.

The nucleus for the bird zoo has been set up here in Dhrangadhra but in order to serve a very large section of the people, attempts are being made to shift this unit to the metropolitan city of Bombay where it is bound to become as an added attraction for tourists. Almost every big city in the world has a zoo, a museum and an aquarium, and perhaps there are none having an out-and-out bird collection in what may be called an 'Ornithological Garden' organized on the lines of the modern zoological parks. The Government of Maharashtra have been approached for placing at our disposal a minimum area of about 50 acres of wooded area for organizing the Indian Ornithological Garden where all types of birds from the biggest Ostrich to the smallest sunbird could be displayed in large areas simulating the natural effects of their habitats.

The methods of display we are contemplating are entirely different from the ones usually found in zoos. There will be no more old methods of displaying birds in small cages. The ostriches will be displayed in vast open air enclosures simulating the African Veldt; sea birds and other birds of northern latitudes will be housed in glass fronted enclosures with conditions reminiscent of arctic environment; birds of the rain forests will be seen in huge aviaries with natural green vegetation usually found in the rain forest areas. In these enclosures artificial effects of thunder, lightning and rain will make the birds feel quite at home; large expanses of water locked areas will be created to form sanctuaries for wading birds and waterfowl. All latest techniques of display will be employed and wherever possible suitable ecological conditions will be arranged for maintaining various species of birds. Wherever necessary changes of temperature, changes of soil, changes of water, changes of food will be judiciously exploited. The method of display that we are planning is entirely different from what is commonly seen in the present day zoos. Instead of viewing the birds from outside the aviary, especially the birdwatchers will have the opportunity to walk through inside the aviaries and feel one with the birds around them. The aviaries will be suitably

landscaped with miniature brooks, waterfalls, cascades, with luxuriant vegetation providing a wonderful background and a natural set up where birdwatchers will really enjoy the birds and observe them at close quarters.

Apart from making this as a birdwatcher's paradise and providing a recreational amenity to the people the main objects of this enterprise will be, to organise large scale breeding operations, breeding birds which are on the verge of extinction and to liberate them back in their natural homes; breeding game birds like pheasants, partridges, etc. for introduction in various forest regions in the country for improving the game bird population.

This institution when fully developed will provide ample opportunities to the bird student intending to do research on bird biology, bird behaviour and bird keeping. To aid the students in particular and to create more interest in the people we have also quite a big plan to provide a good library of books on birds.

The field of aviculture and ornithology is such a vast one that it is not possible to see in a life time all the birds known to exist, and owing to various difficult conditions it may not be possible to keep in captivity certain birds of distant lands. Therefore, we have also in our programme to build up a museum section in the garden for the display of those birds which cannot easily be kept.

We are quite sure that all birdwatchers and bird lovers would like to associate themselves with our project and make the Indian Ornithological Garden a rendezvous of the birdwatchers.

Our project indeed is a very big one and the success of it much depends on gathering the experiences and observations of many naturalists, Ornithologists, aviculturists and birdwatchers. We are always in search of valuable information from birdwatchers all over the world and we are also conscious that if we are to be on the right path of success, our appetites have to be whetted, and therefore, we will be much obliged to receive valuable advice and help in whatever form it may come forth from birdwatchers and other interested persons in the successful organization of the Indian Ornithological Garden.

B. V. Ramanjulu

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#### BLACK REDSTART RETURNING TO THE SAME WINTER QUARTERS

The May 1964 Newsletter gives a few examples which suggest that migratory birds are 'true' to their winter quarters. One more example of a migratory bird returning to the same wintering area has been recorded in Roorkee.

A Black Redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros) regularly roosted in the cup at the base of a ceiling fan shaft in one of the residential quarters at the Central Building Research Institute during 1962-63 winter. The bird was trapped and an improvised plastic ring was placed on its leg. In April 1963 the bird disappeared, but returned to roost in the same cup in October.

T.C. Phatak & Joseph George  
Central Bldg. Res. Inst., Roorkee, U.P.

[At p. 265 of Vol. 53 of the J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. records an instance of attachment to winter quarters in a Black Redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros). On the night of 20 March 1953 he placed a plastic ring on the leg of a bird roosting on the stem of a banana leaf in Mr. Shumoon Abdulali's garden at Thana, Bombay. Thereafter the bird migrated out and was back in the garden on 16 October 1953, and spent the winter in the same area. It was last seen on 23rd March 1954. On 23 October 1954 a bird flew in the house, presumably the same individual, but the ring had been lost. A fresh ring was placed and the bird stayed till end of March 1955. - Ed./

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## REVIEW

AS THE FALCON HER BELLS. By Phillip Glasier. pp. 223 (22.5 x 14.5 cm.). With one coloured and many black and white plates. London, 1963. Heinemann. Price 25s net.

Phillip Glasier, according to the blurb on the cover, is one of the last professional falconers of the British Isles. This book is an absorbing account of his life and of his personal experience with a number of birds that he trained. To give the reader an idea of how interesting this book is I cannot do better than quote from the last page. Trudy incidentally is the dog that is employed for making the birds fly up from cover. Gale, Canisp and Peacher are the trained hawks. . . . 'I put Gale on the wing, and she is seen well up, cruising around at a good three hundred feet or more. She really is a delight to fly. Whether she kills or not, I know she will put on a good show. Trudy is sent in, and up gets a snipe, one of the few that we occasionally come across on this hill. Gale puts in a stoop, which he avoids by a neat twiddle at the right moment, and climbs away in long zig-zags with Gale hard on his tail, following every twist and turn. She is so close that he dare not seek refuge in the gully but goes over it and away, climbing all the time. The binoculars are essential now, for they are probably five hundred feet up and a mile away, growing rapidly smaller every second. The snipe is only a speck at this distance, and the falcon is pretty small too. Several times I see her try to grab him, and at least once I think she's got him; but Mr. Snipe is a very smart fellow and manages to slip out of the way. Each time Gale tries she loses a bit of ground; but in no time she is on his tail again, and still they climb. Gale tries another grab and again is thrown out, and the snipe suddenly decides on different tactics. The few feet Gale lost trying to snatch him give him a chance suddenly to double back. Gale swings round after him, and now the snipe is coming down in a shallow dive, making for safety in the gully.

'She is above and behind him and is wise enough not to keep on his tail, but retains her height and flies even harder. She gets right over him and puts in a stoop as hard as she can go; he twists away, and she is directly below him, but she throws up beautifully and is back in position for another stoop. Again she turns over and comes at him. They are both quite close to us now, and we can hear the noise of her wings as she comes down in a sizzling stoop that will send the snipe to his happy dibbling grounds if she touches him.

'But he is right over the gully now and he plunges in like a stone; as Gale pulls out to avoid hitting the steep banks, the snipe drops into safety, doubtless very thankful, and probably a good deal out of puff. We leave him there and Gale comes in to

my lure. For once her beak is open from her exertions, and she is certainly due for a rest. In fact, we decide that she has done enough and feed her up on the old grouse she killed earlier on. As is so often the case, the best flight of the day ended in the quarry getting away; only the hungriest of hunters would have any regrets.

'Canisp misses an easy one by raking away downwind; the grouse, seizing the opportunity, makes off in the other direction, and she gets nowhere near him. Poacher goes well and gives us a nice young grouse for the larder.

'We make our way down to the cars and go home, Peacher feeding up on my fist as we drive along. Trudy gets what remains of my pick-up piece of meat, and the hawking-party discuss the day's flying. The grouse that eluded us have rejoined their coveys by now and are doubtless telling the tale to their chums, describing how cleverly they eluded that silly falcon.

'I put the falcons back on their blocks, unhood them and give them clean bathwater for the morning. They rouse and preen a bit and then tuck one foot up and rest, contented with their full crops and their day's outing.'

Z.F.

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#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

The British Trust for Ornithology brings out a B.T.O News, subtitled A Bulletin for Birdwatchers. It is instructive to compare this with our own Newsletter and also to see the type of bird-watching that is done in England. Take the July issue for instance. The headings of articles will suggest the type of work that is done. There is note on 'Breeding birds around Beech Grove'. 'Dawn over the Dark Continent'-- this title may not give much of a clue to the reader. It reports on recoveries ~~of birds~~ from Africa of birds ringed in the British Isles. The author is particularly elated about the recovery of two Sand Martins ringed from the famous Chichester roost. 'The Observatories in April and May', 'Bird Census Facts and Figures', 'Where do You like Bird-Watching?' are a few other articles. The standard of the articles is very high and they have all been written by knowledgeable persons. There are several lighthearted touches which make this four page bulletin very attractive. For example:

##### 'BEECH GROVE

'Gifts and offers of garden implements have been made by two members, and a third has sent a cheque as being easier to transport.....'

##### 'CONGRATULATION

'..... to George Waterston, a past Vice President of the B.T.O., on receiving an O.B.E. for services to ornithology in Scotland. As George says: 'Ornithology Before Everything'.



Chick of a first brood accompanying a subsequent incubation

An egg of the Yellow-wattled Lapwing Vanellus malabaricus hatched on 3.3.64. The nest, still containing two addled eggs, was deserted on 6.3. The family was subsequently watched in its territory, the parents also being morphologically recognisable. This chick was first seen to fly on 4.4. On the same day the parents were first seen nest building and copulating in a new restricted area within their territory, and here a fresh scrape, already containing 3 eggs, was found on 12.4. The 4th egg was laid by 13.4 morning. The young bird now behaved like the parent that was off duty, standing and grooming in the same range of shaded areas, the two birds often being quite close together. On 26.4 more systematic watching began, and it was seen that both parents pecked, ran, flew, and jumped at the chick who was careful to keep at least 40 cm. away from them. This continued on 27.4 when, in addition to these physical attacks, the father performed at it the ritualized ground pecking display which birds, either singly or as a pair, use against intraspecific intruders in their territories. The young bird gradually walked away from its father. This was not surprising as the evening foraging period was beginning for both. However this chick was never seen again after watching was discontinued that evening, at least not in this territory, or elsewhere until it had grown out of recognition. The day ended with a violent storm. At this time the chick was not quite full grown, its legs and wattles were duller than those of the adult, and the latter smaller. The fawn of its back and wings was brindled. Three of the eggs of the second clutch hatched on 9.5 and 10.5, the fourth again being deserted on 11/5.

Is it extraordinary for an older chick still to be accompanying its parents while they are incubating a younger clutch?

S.D. Jayakar & H. Spurway  
Genetics & Biometry Laboratory,  
Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

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Strange behaviour of a Crow

A few days back at about 7.15 a.m. I was reading the newspaper in my verandah, when a male House Crow (Corvus splendens) came and alighted about 5 yards from me on the garden lawn. It had something whitish yellow -- an inch long -- in its mouth. It kept on hopping for a couple of minutes and then went to one corner, dug a stone, put the stuff in the hole, put the stone back; covered it with some dried leaves and flew away to a babul (Acacia) tree where incidentally it has its nest with a chick. I left the paper and rushed to the spot where the crow had hidden that piece. On removing the stone, would you believe what I discovered? Guess? A sodden cigarette butt!! What intrigued me was: (a) What was the crow doing with the cigarette butt? (b) Why it hid it under a stone in that fashion? Possibly it was trying to distract my attention from its young chick. If it is so then you will agree that it is a strange way of preservation indeed? Perhaps some of the readers of the Newsletter might be able to throw light on this. The crow sees me every day on the spot at that time.

A. David  
Army H.Q., Delhi

# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 October



NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 10

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RECOVERY OF BIRDS RINGED UNDER THE BNHS/WHO  
BIRD MIGRATION FIELD STUDY PROJECT

The Bombay Natural History Society reports recovery of the following birds ringed under the BNHS/WHO Bird Migration Field Study Project.

Ring No. & Species	Date and Place of ringing	Date and Place of recovery	Remarks
3-326 Agas proc- sa Common Teal	6.2.1964. Manj- haul (c. 25.23 N., 86.30 E.), Monghyr Dist., Bihar	1.5.1964. Killed by man near Kor- milovka (c. 55.00 N., 74.05 E.), Omsk Region	Reported by the Bird- Ringing Bur- -eau, USSR Academy of Sciences, Commission for Nature Protection, Moscow, USSR

Ring No. & Species	Date and Place of ringing	Date and Place of recovery	Remarks
C-380 <u>Anas quer-</u> <u>quedula</u> ♀ Garganey	4.4.1962. Bharat -pur (c. 27.13 N., 77.32 E.), Raja- sthan	10.10.1963. Kill -ed by man, Temir -Tau (c. 50.05 N., 72.55 E.), Kazakh, SSR, Karaganda Region	Reported by Bird- Ringing Bureau, USSR
F-3529 <u>Anas crecca</u> ♀ Common Teal	15.2.1964. Manj- haul (c. 25.23 N., 86.30 E.), Monghyr Dist., Bihar	3.5.1964. Killed by man, 30 km. W. of Petrovsk-Zabay- -kal'skiy (c. 51. 15 N., 108.50 E.), Chita Region	do.
F-3563 <u>Anas clypeata</u> ♀ Shoveller	18.2.1964. do.	6.5.1964. Killed by man, Abagay- tuy (c. 49.35 N., 117.45 E.) Borzya, Chita Region	do.
A-58509 <u>Motacilla</u> <u>flava thun-</u> <u>bergi</u> Greyheaded Yellow Wag- tail	21.1.1964. Edanad (c. 9.20 N., 76.38 E.), Chenganoor, Kerala	14.5.1964. Found sick or wounded and perished, Karabas (c. 49.30 N., 72.55 E.), 40 km. SW. of Kara- ganda, Kazakh SSR	do.
C-149 <u>Anas crecca</u> ♂ Common Teal	18.2.1964. Manj- haul (c. 25.23 N., 86.30 E.), Monghyr Dist., Bihar	29.5.1964. Killed by man, near Bogu- chany (58.20 N., 97.30 E.) Krasnoy- arsk Region	do.
C-387 <u>Anas quer-</u> <u>quedula</u> ♀ Garganey	4.4.1962. Bharat- pur (c. 27.13 N., 77.32 E.), Raja- sthan	3.9.1963. Killed by man, near Ishim- bay (c. 53.30 N., 56.05 E.) Bashkirien (Bashkir ASSR)	do.
C-2071 <u>Anas crecca</u> ♀ Common Teal	3.2.1964. Manj- haul (c. 25.23 N., 86.30 E.), Monghyr Dist., Bihar	14.5.1964. Killed by man, near Sosnovo- Ozerskoe (c. 52.30 N., 111.20 E.) Bur- yat ASSR	do.

Editor  
Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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### PARADOXICAL BEHAVIOUR OF SOME MIGRANTS IN THEIR WINTER QUARTERS

It is a fact that during the breeding season many birds return, year after year, to the same area or breeding grounds. Some even show a remarkable attachment for a particular spot; some others for the same tree that for so many years they have used for building their nests. Others again choose the same cliff or the very same spot on the ground, according to the nature of their breeding habits.

In some way or other such behaviour seems to have a physiological explanation, since breeding is one of the major events of the annual circle of a bird's life. But I cannot find a definite answer to the fact why some migrants actually choose a particular spot for their winter quarters. Such behaviour may have an ecological explanation. On that point I shall have to make a pertinent remark before the end of this article.

Birds on some occasions may not yet be fully understood. That is why at times we find it difficult to explain the behaviour of some individuals. It may be, as in the case of other animals that they like occasionally to do things all their own way; or, to put it in another form, they like to enjoy a certain amount of freedom that will always be within the framework of their hereditary habits.

The facts that I am now going to expose are not based on a single observation but on a series of observations carried out for several years during the winter season, and approximately on the same dates.

Thanks to the generosity of some of my friends over many a year, I have visited the Manori Island during the winter season. Manori village is only about a 15 minutes' walk from the creek of that name. At the very end of the village there is a compound enclosure of stone-walls or a parapet facing the sea-side. In this stone wall I have seen for years the Rock Thrush, Monticola solitaria (pandoo). The compound enclosure contains only scattered palm trees, a few cactus and Lantana bushes; but it looks as if the Rock Thrush is the sole owner of that property! He is always there, year after year. I have tried more than once to chase him away from that spot. But he flies invariably along the shore where there are plenty of rocks and boulders, very typical of that locality. I have often chased the thrush for a distance of more than a mile. Finally I lost sight of him, but I felt sure that he would return to the village. And, in fact, he did. I found the thrush again standing non-chalantly on the same wall as has nearly always been the case whenever I observed him.

At the entrance to the same island of Manori from the right, there is a small promontary or a slight elevation of the ground from the side that faces the Manori village. This is another spot where for quite a good number of years I have observed a pair of redstarts. If disturbed they behave in a way different from the thrush. From the very moment you approach their favourite spot, they fly out of sight. Watching them with my binoculars for some distance I noticed that they do not take much time out before they are once again on their favourite spot. One year on my usual visits to the island I noticed the absence of these redstarts in that particular spot where I was accustomed to see them year after year. On further investigation I came to know that a few days previous to my last visit they were killed by some Sunday visitors to that island. There were a few more redstarts scattered about the island, but that particular spot remained conspicuously empty and startlingly un-red!

In St. Xavier's Villa, Khandala, for many years there used to be a pair of Forest Wagtails. Their winter quarters were reduced to a small area within our property along the large verandah at the back of our building. Both in the morning and evening, and day after day, the wagtails were tugging with their typical sweet short runs after insects and spiders along the verandah or down to the ground; but they always remained close to the building in spite of many noisy holiday-makers who were



Let me advance a possible explanation, though I write under correction. But could it not be possible that the topography of the spot selected for their winter quarters may have, in some way or the other, a resemblance to their summer quarters? This is only a personal opinion. Far be it from me to appear dogmatic about such a question; but there seems to be a definite pointer to it from the explanation given above. I should be pleased, however, to hear the opinions of experts about this matter.

A. Navarro, S.J.

St. Xavier's High School, Bombay 1

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### GOLDEN ORIOLES BREEDING IN RAJKOT

During my 5½ years stay at Rajkot I was always very eager to find out Golden Orioles here. But my quest remained unfulfilled throughout all these years. Last year my hopes had revived. I heard, or at least I thought I heard, calls like Golden Orioles', while I was brushing my teeth at about 6.15 to 6.30 a.m. on 25 June 1963. It came from the rows of trees of the Rajkumar College. I at once went to those trees, brush in hand, to ascertain the matter. But I could not find out the author of the calls. This continued successively for three days at about the same time and after searching among those trees I was always a little disappointed. I then heard the calls again on 2 July and 26th July. I referred the matter to K.S. Lavkumar. He said that he had not seen Golden Orioles in the Rajkumar College before but he did not rule out the possibility.

This year again I heard the same calls and from the same direction at 9 a.m. about a month back. As I had to stand in a queue for purchasing sugar, I could not go to the spot to ascertain. After 4 to 5 days when I went to see K.S. Lavkumar, he informed me that he saw from the terrace of the Rajkumar College a pair of Golden Orioles chasing a shikra. The female returned to the direction it came from, but the male sat for a while on the topmost branches of the Indian Cork Tree just near the terrace. He also told me that he believed, perhaps, the birds might have a nest in the trees of the Rajkumar College. This rekindled the hope in my heart.

On 12 July 1964 two of our new but enthusiastic members informed me that they had seen Golden Orioles among the trees of the temple of Karneshwar Bahadav, which is just overhanging the banks of the Naji River behind the Central Jail. I wanted to make sure about this. Some of us therefore arranged a birdwatching outing roundabout the temple on 19 July. As scheduled we left at 6.30 a.m. on the 19th on bicycles. On reaching the place I heard the liquid flute-like notes of the Golden Orioles several times. We became very hopeful and continued our search vigorously and succeeded. Two birds, a male and a female, were flitting among the trees of the temple as well as other nearby trees. Our keenness, instead of being abated by having a first momentary glimpse, aggravated. We began searching intently among the trees and moved here and there as the calls of the Golden Orioles changed direction.

Suddenly a third member asked us to come to him as he had found out the nest of the bird as well. We hurriedly went to him, who was simply a few feet away from us, and there the nest was, some 12 to 15 feet high in a fork of the Silk Cotton Tree. What a pleasant surprise! We never expected that we would

be so lucky and that too so soon. Had we been simply able to have a look at the birds, we would have congratulated ourselves. What a compact nest! We were never tired to have a look at it. We stayed there up to 10.30 a.m. During this period we heard the birds calling many a times. The pair obliged us like anything by entertaining with their melodious notes.

Again, we visited the place in the afternoon at 5.30 p.m. The female was in the nest. From the manner she ~~sat~~ and stayed in the nest, it was evident that there were eggs in the nest and she was brooding. But this was attended only by the female. The male did not take part in it. He simply used to stay in the vicinity of the nest. Whenever the female left the nest, he kept a vigilant guard over it and chased crows and mynas which chanced to pass near the nest.

The female seemed to be very shy and timid. She immediately left the nest whenever we tried to go nearer. We therefore preferred to stay a little away and watch the proceedings from there. Even while brooding, the female seemed to us to be always a little restless as she used to move her head from side to side.

Other members of our Club were informed about the Golden Orioles and the nest and they joined us on 22 July to have a look at the nest and the birds.

Lalsinh M. Raol

Lalit Nivas, Rajkot.

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#### THE WRYNECK OBSERVED IN MORENA, M.P.

It is rather aggravating when you are unable to recognize the bird you may have observed and the reference material in possession is found inadequate. It is equally exhilarating when you finally do manage to pin the bird and add one more to your list of birds observed. I had such an experience with the wryneck.

I first observed the bird on 19 October 1963 in the compound of my neighbour at Morena. Not having binoculars handy, and the distance being about 25 yards, with the little time the bird gave me, my observations were faulty. The behaviour of the bird gave me the impression of its not feeling quite at home. It sat on the ground, when it moved its movements were rather sluggish. It looked around apparently unable to decide what to do. I concluded it was the Striolated Bunting. For the next six months there was no sign of the bird. Finally in the following month of April (2.4.64) I greeted the bird in my compound. On that early morning I observed my 'Striolated Bunting' three feet away on the ground. The more I watched it closely the more puzzled I was. I observed its mottled grey and barred plumage with the distinct dark markings on the back and sides of the neck and crown. The plumage gave an impression of being delicate as in the case of the Nightjars. Its toes, like those of the woodpeckers and the parakeets had the outer toe turned back, a feature that associates a bird to arboreal life. A bigger shock came when the bird thrust forth a black tongue and started pecking ants from the ground. After watching for about 10 minutes, feeling quite frustrated I at once wrote down my observations and made quick sketches with the pen. Then I observed the bird



on 6th April, 7th April and 10th and 12th April in the mornings feeding on ants on the lawn or near the hedge. The bird may have frequented my garden every morning, but somehow I may have missed it from seeing it daily. Finally I moved away from Morena by the end of March. The bird remained in my list as unidentified till recently when I happened to recognize it from a plate in the BREEDING BIRDS OF KASHMIR.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA & PAKISTAN mentions Jynx torquilla torquilla as wintering 'in W. Pakistan, Nepal terai and through western and central India, south to Mysore'. However, throughout this last winter I strained myself to see more of the bird, but in vain; I never observed another one anywhere in the district. The bird it seems to be not very common in the plains and specially in such countryside as the ravines of Chembal.

Pratap Singh

S.D.O. Police, Sheopur,  
Morena Dist., M.P.

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#### BIRDS AT THEKADI, KERALA

I wrote to Mr. K.K. Neelakantan about my forthcoming wish to visit to South India in May listing some birds which I particularly wanted to see on this trip. He promptly replied enclosing a copy of his article 'Birds of Thekadi' and adding that I was sure to see at least some of them.

Fortified with this list and Dr. Salim Ali's THE BIRDS OF TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN very kindly lent me by my young friend Mr. B. Vijayraghavan of the Madras Secretariate I reached Thekadi on the afternoon of May 26. In half an hour's birdwatching before lunch I saw three 'new' birds. In the afternoon I took a trip in a boat to Periyar Lake but saw very few birds.

Next morning I went out at 5.35 a.m. The grandeur of the lofty forest of Tectona, Terminalia and various other trees had a primeval quality about it and reminded me of our magnificent Himalayan forests which are equally awe-inspiring.

The forest in that early hour rang with such wondrous bird song as I had not heard before. I watched birds till 2.00 p.m. with two short breaks for breakfast and lunch. During that period I added 14 more birds to my life list! All except one were seen within a furlong of the Tourist Bungalow, Class II.

When I showed my list to Mr. Neelakantan on May 30, he said that he would have gladly exchanged his list for mine! He had never seen a rufous woodpecker or a crimsonthroated barbet. On the other hand I was terribly disappointed at having missed the Malabar Trogon. Thirty three birds are common in our lists. The migrants were totally absent in May.

It is interesting to note that while Mr. Neelakantan saw the Yellowcheeked Tit and the Purple Sunbird I saw the Grey Tit and the Purplerumped Sunbird. Birds marked with an asterisk in the list given below were new to me.

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Jungle Crow              | 2.*Southern Tree Pic      |
| 3. Grey Tit with fledglings | 4.*Velvetfronted Nuthatch |

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|--|---|
| 5. Malabar Jungle Babbler  | 6. *Rufous Babbler                                      |
| 7. Iora  | 8. Chloropsis (Jerdon's ?)                              |
| 9. *Yellowbrowed Bulbul  | 10. Southern Redwhiskered Bulbul                        |
| 11. *Nilgiri Pied Bushchat<br>near Peermade from moving bus      | 12. *Whitethroated Ground Thrush                        |
| 13. *Malabar Whistling Thrush                                    | 14. *Nilgiri Verditer Flycatcher                        |
| 15. *Blacknaped Blue Flycatcher                                  | 17. *Orange Minivet; Nesting                            |
| 16. *Malabar Wood Shrike   | 19. Malabar Large Racket-tailed Drongo with fledgelings |
| 18. Large Indian Cuckoo Shrike; ♀                                | 22. *Southern Grackle; Nesting                          |
| 20. Tailor Bird  | 24. House Sparrow at Kumilli                            |
| 21. Ashy Wren Warbler  | 26. Purplerumped Sunbird                                |
| 23. Southern Jungle Myna with young                              | 28. South Indian Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker, ♀       |
| 25. Large Pied Wagtail, near Lake                                | 30. *Southern Rufous Woodpecker, ♂                      |
| 27. Nilgiri Flowerpecker   | 32. Small Green Barbet                                  |
| 29. *Malabar Pygmy Woodpecker two                                | 34. Crow-Pheasant                                       |
| 31. Malabar Goldenbacked Woodpecker with young                   | 36. Pied Kingfisher, in the Lake                        |
| 33. *Malabar Crimsonthroated Barbet                              | 38. Whitebreasted Kingfisher at Kumilli                 |
| 35. *Bluewinged Parakeet   | 41. Brahminy Kite                                       |
| 37. Common Kingfisher; Lake                                      | 43. Crested Honey Buzzard                               |
| 39. *Malabar Grey Hornbill                                       | 45. *Jerdon's Imperial Pigeon                           |
| 40. Whitebacked Vulture  |   |
| 42. Shikra   |   |
| 44. Hawk flying very late in the evening - Blackcrest -ed Baza ? |   |
| 46. Cormorant, Lake  | 47. Darter, Lake  |
| 48. Little Egret, Lake   | 49. Pond Heron, Lake                                    |

Mrs. Usha Ganguli

#### REVIEW

THE BOOK OF CAGE BIRDS. By Charles Trevistock. pp. 107. Stanley Paul, London. Price 16 s.

Mr. Trevistock is by way of being a professional pet-keeper. He owns a small bird zoo of nearly 300 inhabitants. He lectures, broadcasts and writes about the care of pets. The present book is concerned only with bird pets and tells the amateur how to construct an aviary, which kinds of cages to choose, and generally deals with every kind of problem the owner of a cage bird is likely to face, including the diagnosis and treatment of the different kinds of diseases that the bird is new to. The more usual bird pets like budgerigars, finches, canaries, quails and so on are given a chapter. People who keep parrots will be particularly interested in the chapter on 'Teaching birds to Talk'. This chapter will answer a question which once stumped our greatest ornithologist. When a bird fancier once asked him what was the best way to teach his macaw to talk he could only suggest that a good competent munshi should be engaged each to describe the particular requirements. Incidentally Mr. Trevistock thinks that the Indian Hill Myna is a far better talker than any macaw or parrot.

Keeping cage birds in England seems to be much easier than it is in India for the reason that there is now a great deal of equipment not all of it essential it seems to me, available

there for different bird uses. Several kinds of cages, special breeding boxes for the breeding season, hospital boxes for the invalid and ready-to-eat meals in plastic bags, with earthworms chopped up and mixed with seeds, all containing right amount of calories and vitamins are available it seems in almost any shop round any corner.

ly/ It is obvious that Mr. Trevistock is essential/a practical who has to recourse to the medium of the written word purely as a necessary vehicle for conveying his advice and suggestions. Consequently, while his book is admirable for those who intend to profit by it in a practical manner, it will have small use for the bird lovers who simply enjoy reading anything written about birds.

L.F.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### Introducing waterbirds on newly constructed dam sites

The vast multi-purpose projects that are springing all over our country usually do a lot of damage by destroying the natural habitat of birds and animals. However, some compensation can be obtained if waterbirds are introduced on the new lakes that are formed.

In Ceylon the waters of the newly constructed Mamal Oya reservoir have attracted vast flocks of waterbirds. Next to Cormorants, Pelicans were the most numerous. Two varieties of egrets have been reported from the shore in their hundreds. More than a dozen Painted Storks were present, and a Whitebellied Sea Eagle, a rarity in that area, was noticed flying high above the water

## CORRESPONDENCE

### Flamingos at Kapurwadi tank near Ahmednagar, Maharashtra State

During the month of July 1963, I learned that some peculiar birds were seen at Kapurwadi tank which is three miles away from Ahmednagar City and was further told that those were Flamingos. So I was on their watch this year and to know whether these are the regular visitors to this area.

During the first week of the month of July 1964 I was told that flamingos have come again, so I rushed to the spot on 9th July 1964. I observed these lovely birds for the first time but the number of them was very small, about three. It seems that flamingos do take a pause at this place.

I do remember the collection of the Flamingos at Amalner (Dist. Jalgaon) during the same month in 1961. This was reported in most of the Marathi newspapers and further it was stated that one of it is preserved in the museum of Pratap College, Amalner. I have confirmed the same from the Head of the Zoology Department of that College. He has written to me that few flamingos were observed during the month of July 1961 in the fields on the banks of Tapi River bed when the rains were very heavy.

This means that the flamingos move during this month - July - and the probable route may be followed as: from their home grounds to Khandesh-Ahmednagar-to somewhere else, or the route

may be reverse which is followed by them. One must note that it is one line of thought.

Prof. B.J. Dangre  
380, Diwane Bhuwan, Chitalc Rd.,  
Ahmednagar

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### Swallow migration

With reference to the observation of Drs. S.D. Jayakar and H. Spurway on the arrival of the Common Swallow in Bhubaneswar (Newsletter Vol. 4, September 1964, pp. 3-4) I would like to record my observation on the departure and arrival of the Common Swallow in the Calcutta area this year.

The Common Swallow was seen in large numbers in the environs of Calcutta throughout the winter. It was particularly common in the marshy areas. From the first week of April, its numbers began to decrease; from 25th April, the decrease in its number was noticeably fast, so that by the middle of May, all had left, none being seen after 17th May.

On 5th July a few of them were noticed. On 11th July a few more, and since then their number is progressively increasing. The last observation made on 13th September shows that it is now in fairly good numbers. The peak is expected to be reached in late October or early November.

S.S. Saha  
Zoological Survey of India  
Indian Museum, Calcutta

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### Appearance of the Alpine Swift (Micropus melba) early in the year

Some incredibly large-sized swifts appeared in our neighbourhood on the evening of 11th January 1963, as they sped from north-west to south-east. Since that day they were to be seen every evening flying in the same direction. We watched them doing so till the end of February.

Without doubt the birds appeared to be of the Alpine species, judging from their otherwise darkish bodies and from their rapid flight. But their occurrence near Guntur was quite surprising and puzzling. So we continued our observation. On the evening of the 23rd February 1963, there was a regular 'flow' of these birds in their usual direction for about 20 minutes. We had then a very good opportunity of verifying our ~~prior~~ prior identification.

This year, too, we had these birds, flying by the same route every evening during January and February. At first we thought these flights represented local migration, the birds being only seen here on their way. This however was disproved by the fact that the birds were seen only in the evenings, and every evening, for two months. Our observations during 1963 and 1964 have led us to believe that it was not a case of local migration, but that (in January and February of 1963 and 1964) the swifts were really going to their roosting places each evening, after their day-long hunt for food somewhere to the north-west of our observation point (i.e. our house at Guntur).

V. Ravi

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### Breast-wetting by brooding Cattle Egrets

I read with interest the letter in the Newsletter for Bird-watchers regarding breast wetting.

On two visits to a nesting colony of cattle egrets near here I observed and filmed, the egrets flying out from the colony flopping into deep water in the River Indus and returning again to the colony. At the time the birds were brooding downy young. They were brooding very close during the heat of the day and were reluctant to leave the nests for more than a minute or two. I suggest that the breast wetting served a double function of cooling the parent who for this hot part of the day was fully exposed to the sun and cooling (and perhaps providing a drink?) the young birds. The adults did not appear to drink while in the water. The whole operation only took a few seconds. As the sun began to fall the operation ceased.

J.C. Wright

Lower Indus Project, Sukkur,  
West Pakistan

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### House Sparrows in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

A note on House Sparrows here. The sparrows which in our locality are continuous breeders somehow stopped their activities for a period of more than a month between May and July. The reason may be that the days were extremely hot during that period. The birds resumed their activities in this direction some time in July.

V. Ravi

President, Nature Study Club  
Vallabhajosyula House  
Guntur, A.P.

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### An experience in birdwatching

Our family uses every opportunity to go out on birdwatching 'expeditions'. I have noticed that each time a different species of bird is more in evidence than others. Sometimes it is racket-tailed drongos, another time it is blackheaded orioles, yet another time it is redwhiskered bulbuls and so on. On one birdwatching outing arranged by our Club, a member was compiling a list of birds seen that day. Every other bird was a common drongo, much to her disgust.

No doubt the availability of their particular brand of food or the mating season is responsible for this. But my husband seems to be justified when he says that we see birds only when they accord us that privilege. If this is not so, then I cannot account for the fact that I have been able to see certain birds. The Indian Pitta that came to my garden was here only for half an hour or so. I could very easily have missed it. The same goes for so many other birds that have just passed through. Somehow I look out of the window or step down to the garden at the proper time.

Have any other readers experienced this?

Mrs. Leela Nilakanta

Theosophical Colony, Juhu, Bombay

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Arrival of Wagtails in South India

In the course of a bus run from Mangalore to Malpe (West Coast) on the morning of 9th September, this year, I saw four individuals of the wagtail (Motacilla alba) at four different places along the route.

In view of the paucity of records about arrival dates of migrants in various parts of India, this information may be worth recording.

J. S. Serrao

%Bombay Natural History Society  
Bombay

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Zafar Futehally  
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# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 November



A Plea for Nature Conservation

IS IT TOO LATE?

I have just read through Rachel Carson's Silent Spring. How very depressing! At first, one is tempted to shrug ones shoulders and to dismiss her warnings as just a little too far fetched and in an off hand manner the entire disturbing subject is brushed aside with an "After all, the interests of man must come first. We cannot be too sentimental about animals". Still others salve their consciences by reminding one that the Government is alive to the problem of conserving the wild life of the country, "Have we not set aside large areas of forest country as sanctuaries and national parks, when we can ill spare even this much?" they question. Then, we are celebrating Wild Life Weeks, and commemorating animals and birds in stamps and besides, each state has legislated laws to preserve its wild life; can we do more? True the lion roars in the Gir and people flock to see the King of Beasts, the Rhino lumbers through tall elephant grass of the Kaziranga and any one with necessary money in the pocket can ride an elephant to admire the prehistoric lines of its form, while not far at the foot of the great Himalayas, the Water Buffalo tosses its horns in defiance of extinction, all with the help of man. We can pat ourselves on the back and say well done, etc. But the lion, the rhino and the water buffalo are just mere icings on the cake as it were. They have been preserved in their small habitats and at the moment they do enjoy a degree of security, but it is the larger section of animal life in the country the rank and file among the Indian beasts as it were who are being systematically disseminated. All over the country the common animals and birds are getting scarcer and scarcer. and the country is becoming poorer and poorer for it. Insidiously the hand of man is making inroads into the plant and animal life of the country and gradually over the years among the richest flora and fauna in the world is being depleted of its variety and its quantity. The Rhinos and Buffalows can be preserved in enclosures, while lions are easily bred in captivity, but what of all the other small and inconspicuous little animals and plants? Can we provide homes for them all? Even if we do, what a loss their absence will be to our economy and to the aesthetic quality of our environment. Can they be adequately replaced? In this article, I would like to discuss this with my readers, and I do hope that after we have considered all the points, a sufficient urgency will be created so that we might raise a voice loud enough to be heard by all our countrymen.

Many of us who have been actively interested in natural history since the 'forties' have noted the fantastic rate at which animals and birds have become reduced in numbers. The period following independence, quite naturally diverted all attention towards other more, or seemingly more, important matters and in the upheaval much damage was done to the natural riches of our countryside. This was not because of any direct exploitation, but due to neglect. True, the reduction in numbers of sporting animals and birds can be attributed to the unlicensed killing by 'sportsmen' all over the country, but this is not true of all the other forms of life, which the shikari never bothered to give a second glance at, and we have to accept the argument that not one factor, but the combination of a great many has lead to the sorry state of affairs prevailing at the moment. If therefore we are to ensure that our wild life is not jeopardised further, we must consider all these before embarking on enacting legislation in this direction, and I am one of those people who feel that there should be no law unless it can be enforced, as a mockery of a law is far worse in its ultimate results than not having it at all. Besides laws governing shooting periods and shootable species are not quite sufficient to stem the tide of destruction. They can be a part of the effort and not constitute the whole. It is from this premise that I wish to place my arguments.



Before I elaborate on the dangerous position of the commoner birds and other animals, I shall take specific instances of those species which at the moment are close to extinction and this even though legal protection has been extended to them. The first instance which comes to mind is that of the Great Indian Bustard. It has been drastically reduced in numbers and even though killing it is an offence in the eyes of law, where is the machinery to bring the offenders to book? Unprincipled shikaris have done much damage and even today they are playing their destructive role. However, even if we could devise some effective methods of curbing their activities, the very serious problem arises as to the effective protection they need when they are on their eggs. For them to rear a brood, they must have tall grass cover, and the pressure of cattle on the land has greatly reduced areas of grassland, so that the breeding bustard is now faced with a much more serious threat of incubating in exposed positions so that it is continually disturbed and whereas this may not effect the life of the wary adult, it does prevent the successful hatching of the eggs, and in a slow breeder like the Bustard this can be a very definite curbing of any increase in the population, while all the while the accidental death rate becomes greater, and natural death is a continual reducing factor.

To make things difficult, this grand bird in nature is a great rover and extends over large areas, though of-course with suitable habitat and a plentiful supply of food they would be more restricted. These conditions are of-course not to be expected. The Bustard will remain a problem to the conservationist. I am however, very confident that here we have a species which can best be saved for posterity by rearing in large paddocks under semi domestication.

Another grand bird though not in the immediate danger of extinction is the Sarus which has of late in many areas become less in numbers. This is not because of the shikaris, as happily a legend stays their trigger-happy fingers. But the danger is more subtle, as they are gradually finding places to breed in becoming less and less. In Saurashtra I can point many a place where the natural growth of reeds is becoming depleted as these are in demand for thatching to protect adobe walls during the rains. It is quite natural that the Sarus is retreating as a breeder from over much of its former range.

A bird which I have noted has greatly reduced during the last two decades is the ubiquitous Grey Partridge. Formerly these were fairly plentiful every where, but now in their former areas, they are less and less apparent. The cause of-course in their case is due to the larger rate of snaring that is being practised now, but the threat is more a result of the despoiling of grasslands, and in farmlands, of natural vegetation along the hedges. Over great tracts of Saurashtra, one rarely sees any hedgerows and the grass between two properties is merely a foot across as every inch is deemed necessary for the growth of the valuable ground nut, which itself does not provide any shelter at all. Yet, the population of both the Grey and Painted partridges is quite common in areas where established 'wadis' with their hedges and stands of sugarcane guarantee shelter. Thus then the destruction is more through the damage done to the natural vegetation rather than by direct killing of the individual species.

This danger, therefore, not only faces the game birds and animals, but it also is a life and death problem for all species of birds, mammals and insects. The question, therefore, is not limited to the enforcing of the shooting laws and promoting of ethics among the 'sportsmen' but lies in the proper management of land. It is a far wider field of endeavour and it might well seem that we have gone a little too far and that it is now really too late to do anything effective about saving our animals and birds. I, however, refuse to be pessimistic; it is not too late. Whether it is late or not, the point is that it is certainly very important that we start seriously considering that there is a great need for the proper management of our land, the cultivated areas, the grasslands and grazing

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between two properties is merely a foot across as every inch is deemed necessary for the growth of the valuable ground nut, which itself does not provide any shelter at all. Yet, the population of both the Grey and Painted partridges is quite common in areas where established 'wadis' with their hedges and stands of sugarcane guarantee shelter. Thus then the destruction is more through the damage done to the natural vegetation rather than by direct killing of the individual species.

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which are so alarmingly dwindling in every part of the country. Whether this is for the sake of the animals and birds, is immaterial, the need to do this is for the sake of the already overpopulated millions which are perennially faced with shortage of food. There is need for proper agricultural methods, but this, insofar as the crops are concerned, I cannot deal with here, but in between the intensive farming which is now becoming the need of the day and is in fact being developed in large areas of the country, it is the inter cultivation plots which effect us in our hope for conservation. There is little doubt that if between every farm plot the farmers were to be encouraged to allow trees to grow, it would hinder their agricultural practices but little, where as it would greatly help in building up shelter for innumerable birds and animals of every sort. Where better types of trees cannot grow without adequate watering, the farmers can, with profit, allow a growth of thorny bushes to develop into hedges, these would be invaluable as checks to erosion by wind and water and in this manner be of great value to farming. Again they could prevent unnecessary movement of stray cattle through the properties. Should these hedges be composed of acacias then added to the protective quality of the hedges, would be the great soil enriching nitrogenous bacteria which live within the roots of leguminous plants to which the acacias belong. The space occupied by these would be amply weighed up against by the extra fertility of the soil brought about by the action of these nitrifying bacteria. Not only this, but the interception of dry winds which are such a bane in large parts of the country during summer and also during the N.E. Monsoon in the cool season, would result in less loss of water by the crops and they would need less irrigation valuable saving in water would result. These hedges would then be of great value and in them would be an assured home for a varied community of wild life ranging from the minutest insect to the birds and mammals we would like to see preserved. The 'humanists' would quite naturally ask what benefit after all the animals would be to the farmer, for on the contrary they might well prove a nuisance. The many insectivorous birds would be of immense help in fighting insects and they would be effective in checking their populations which we now have to do with the help of widespread spraying of insecticides. These insecticides are also lethal to the many valuable insects which act as agents of pollination and their death can do great harm. More protection, and more will be the survival of new generations of birds and these with other small forms of life like the hedgehogs and shrews will improve the farmer's fight against the varied pests which he certainly cannot by himself manage. Besides there is not sufficient technical know how among our agriculturists to handle the deadly pesticides. The pest will by natural means get checked and we shall have the joy of having our varied birds and animal life saved for us and the generations to come. The aims of the conservationists are thus linked to those of the agriculturist. There is indeed a dearth noticeable of so many valuable bird friends such as the little Spotted Owlet, the larger owls, the night flying Nightjars, all of which feed on night insects while the various warblers, the babblers, the mynahs of three species, the Rollers, the Bulbuls, Drongos, Black-winged Kites, and various species of Shrikes all find it difficult to locate places to build their nests in and all of them are of great help in the fight against the very insects to kill which we turn to chemical antidotes. The Partridges and the Quails would also increase as is proved by their still being common in irrigated land, despite poaching being unchecked. These would provide pleasure for the shikaris as well as be of help to the cultivator in destroying termites and grubs in the soil adjoining the undergrowth where they would find shelter from their predatory associates.

With the shortage of food, there is another anxiety we all are faced with and this is the problem of feeding our domesticated animals. It has become imperative that we improve our grazing laws and take steps to preserve the grasslands, both from the point of view of providing more fodder as well as to protect the soil which is being very severely eroded each season by heavy rains during the monsoon. In these grasslands, we can quite easily restore the game birds and animals to the same numbers as before the decline at the turn of the century. Even today, there are a few good grasslands in Saurashtra, where the painted partridge can be heard calling

during the rains, and the Florican comes to breed, but these havens are rapidly shrinking before ravaging hordes of cattle and goats. In these grasslands, we can with judiciously enforced game laws find Chinkara, Buck and Maelgai, and of-course the non-sporting species of mammals and birds would increase greatly. The steeper sides of ravines could be made into thorn forests for added binding of the soil and these would increase the acreage of forest-land with all the resulting benefits. The wastelands which scour our countryside are other fruitful areas for planned improvement, and here the state forest departments should be expected to start vigorous afforestation plans and if individual peasants come forward to plant fruit trees, they should be given full encouragement. These areas can in a short time become green belts full of birds and quite a large number of useful birds and mammals would find breeding areas. It will, therefore, be seen that the demands of conservation are in no way inimical to the welfare of the human race and that the demands of the people of India are best met with by careful measures of conservation.

Nature in various ways can be made an ally to help us improve our fodder and food problem and with her help, we can once again have a proper balance by which the best fruits of an abundant world can be ours to enjoy. Man must become harmonious with his environment as he is dependant on the plants for his ultimate well being. Prosperity is linked directly and indirectly to vegetation and the shameless exploitation of this natural asset is the root of all our difficulties and among these to share the difficulties without knowing the causes and the ways of overcoming them, are the other living creatures which have inherited the world with us. We can and must learn to live in harmony with the many large and small animals and their demands in no way jeopardise our welfare. Our adjustment with the natural world will ensure our survival and the more we come in conflict with the needs of nature the poorer will be our chance of ultimate survival as a race which after all is said and done is still one of the many species that are the culmination of nature's great development. Man must learn to respect the great creation around him and it is by this admiration for the world around him, that he will be able to accept his true worth and thereby through the urgency to preserve his kind will he understand the value of peace, and make him break down the hatred of race for race and group for group. I, therefore, feel that conservation has a far deeper and more valuable role to play than simply to preserve a few lions here or a few bustards there. It is a tribute to our grand heritage, an appreciation for what we and ours are worth, and to my mind it is the true form of worship which we can extend to the Creator. We owe this to ourselves and to the generations to come, a world with all its beauties, its colour, its movement, its song. Every small living thing is a delicate pinnacle of a meticulously developed plan that has taken eons to evolve and the least bit of neglect in maintaining the balance can destroy the fragile inter-relationship. Man can be man only if the birds are there to sing, the flowers to bloom, the lively fawns to run across verdant fields, and what will life be without the changing pageant of the seasons; the bursting blooms on deciduous trees, the gracious shade of evergreen arbours, the perfumed sprays of jasmins and night queens, and how still would be a world devoid of the thrill of larks mounting a tumultuous sky, or the bubbling songs of Myiads on a summer's dawn. How great would be the loss of the spreading trains of peafowl, or of gardens without the humming of bees, or the flash of sunbirds and orioles. It is only when we visit the few unspoilt spots left that we realise the great void we daily suffer in the absence of all these varied gifts of nature. This loss is due to our own carelessness and even today we can make good, as there are still enough birds and animals left to come back into our lives if given the encouragement and the chance. It might however be too late in a few more decades to come.

K.S. Lavkumar.

Rajkumar College,  
Bodkot, GUJARAT

## REVIEW

### PORTRAIT OF A RIVER. By Guy Mountfort.

The Danube is perhaps associated with gay ballrooms and dancers. Guy Mountfort gives us another picture - not a sparkling blue, but a muddy brown, and surrounded by steppe and marsh that harbour a large variety of bird life, much of which is familiar to us in India.

I see that I used the word "harbour". But one of the striking features of Guy Mountfort's book is of the threats to many species, notably the Great Bustard. Although this strikes a chord for us in India, the threat is rather different in Bulgaria and Hungary, the two countries Mountfort and his distinguished team visited. There combine harvesters and egg-collectors are the menaces. The open steppe has been turned into collective farms. This has changed the bird life to a large degree, but the Bustards hang on, laying their eggs in the crops. But at the crucial time lines of combine harvesters sweep over the land. Eggs and young are destroyed.

The demand for Bustards' eggs is enormous. Zoos like to incubate them so that they can trade the young.

Mountfort's sad conclusion is: "It is obvious that the eventual extermination of the Great Bustard cannot be long delayed."

A similar dismal story comes out about the Pelicans. A century ago there were reckoned to be about a million in the Danube delta. Now there are about 2,500 breeding pairs. Mountfort says that there are some signs of recovery but he records the horrifying story of peasant fishermen deliberately burning nests with young in a wildlife reserve in Bulgaria because they looked upon them as rivals.

Many of the reed beds which shelter herons, egrets, grebes, and many other species are being exploited for cellulose. Once wild areas are being turned into holiday camps.

Nevertheless, Mountfort does not paint a hopeless picture and says: "The labyrinth of the Danube marshes, with its oceans of reeds, countless inaccessible islands and tortuous channels, continues to defy man's penetration and lust for land reclamation. Over an area of nearly 2,000 square miles Nature is supreme and all forms of wildlife thrive in almost undiminished numbers."

It is interesting to learn that apart from the spread of many woodland species into the shelter belts being developed on the steppe, birds of the arid wastes are adapting themselves to the new agricultural conditions.

Those who have read Mountfort's earlier "Portrait of a Wilderness" describing expeditions in the Coto Donana in Southern Spain will know how excellent a writer he is. What could be a rather tedious list of species seen becomes a fascinating account of finding them and the mishaps that can occur in trying to photograph them. The book is enlivened by the contacts with modern Bulgarian and Hungarian life, some depressing since they illustrate the unfortunate aspects of revolution, but others reassuring in showing how all revolutions have ultimately to come to terms with human beings.

Eric Hosking's superb photos add lustre to this book. They cover not only birds, local scenes and people, but also the expedition's vehicles bogged down in river beds and mud, an experience familiar to your reviewer in his own pursuit of birds.

Peter Jackson.

CORRESPONDENCE

"From your October issue Volume 4 1964, it is gratifying to know that ducks ringed in India have been recovered in the U.S.S.R. Some of these records were made in the month of May which would normally be during the breeding time. It would be interesting for the members to know how the ducks were killed if it were during the close season."

R.S. Dharmakumarshinhji  
26, Lotus Court,  
Jamshedji Tata Road,  
BOMBAY 1.

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"Yesterday I came home from a fortnight's holiday in the Palni Hills near Kodaikanal.

As my bus brought me closer to Ramnad my eager thoughts turned to the paradise flycatcher that became intimate with me last year. He used to flit through the trees beside me when I walked the short path between my bungalow and the school where I do my daily work. At any time of day he would make quick sallies into my study or living room, from the verandah trellis where he loved to perch. He would fly into my bedroom, perch on mosquito poles or rafters, cock his head at me if I were there, leave unmistakable traces of his visit if I were not. He had a chestnut back and short tail, and a shining white shirt front. In March he grew a white feather on each shoulder. On April 14th he must have flown North, for I did not see him after the 13th. Now I expected him to have arrived in Ramnad early in October, and I was anxious to see him again, to learn whether he were still as friendly as he used to be, and to discover what had happened to his plumage.

At noon, I reached home, where the October volume of the Newsletter awaited me. I read it at siesta time, and was intrigued by Father Navarro's article on the behaviour of migrant birds in their winter quarters. I know that they do seem to come to the same spot season after season, but unless individuals have some particular indentifying marks how can one be sure that the same individuals return, and not merely relatives? Yesterday evening I saw a paradise flycatcher in my garden, chestnut back, short tail, white under parts, but no white feathers in its top coat. I shall wait to see if this or another individual displays the same friendliness as last year's acquaintance. If so, perhaps it would be safe to assume that it is the same individual as this is an unusual behaviour pattern. Ringing it last year would have made it sure, but since a friend who rescued one of this species from her cat, when it flew into the verandah at night, told me that it shed most of its feathers when it was handled.

Mrs. Nilakanta asks if any other readers have experienced confirmation of her husband's assertion 'that we see birds only when they accord us that privilege'. Did I not long for years to see an Indian pitta until one day in November one flew into the dining room where I was working, made a complete circuit of the room displaying itself on all sides and fluttered out as it had come, through the living room. I never saw another one in that compound.

Only two weeks ago I was on an early morning walk in a shola below the cottage in the hills, 5,000 in elevation. While seeing yellow-browed bulbuls, gray tits, and gray-headed flycatchers, I kept hearing a bubbling that grew more and more gurgling and unrestrained as if a welling fountain were breaking all bounds. The more I chased the sound, the more bulbuls fluttered on every hand, until I gave up and went home. Mr. and Mrs. Nilakanta would not be surprised to learn that the ebullient flock of scimitar babblers that had been playing blind man's bluff with me

down in the shola were waiting for me among the coffee plants in my own front garden.

In that same garden in March, 1964, I had seen my first loriquet. Again I saw just one specimen on September 30. Every day I went to the same place at all hours without success. On October 10 a friend came to lunch. I showed her around the grounds, and passing under a certain tree I said, "This is where I saw a loriquet last week." Immediately one flew down from the tree, dipping low to display its bright red spot, and then the air burst into life with loriquets diving and flying in all directions, squeaking excitedly as they flew all through the trees on either side as we walked along fifty feet farther. I stayed three days longer and never saw another loriquet.

I have long understood that birdwatching is a glimpsing of our fellow creatures that we humans are allowed to take by their courtesy."

Miss Miriam D. Brown  
Singapore,  
Penang, MALAYSIAN STATE.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2nd Annual General Meeting of the Birdwatchers Field Club of India will be held on Sunday 20th December, 1964 at 5-00 p.m., at the residence of Mr. Zafar Futehally, Juhu Lane, Andheri, Bombay 58.

= A G E N D A =

- 1) To receive a report from the Hon. Secretary about the progress of the Club and its various branches during the year.
- 2) To receive a report from the Treasurer about the finances of the Club.
- 3) To elect a President, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, other Office Bearers and the Editorial Board, for the Newsletter for the coming year.
- 4) Any other business with the permission of the Chair.

Zafar Futehally  
Hon. Secretary.

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Zafar Futehally,  
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers,  
32-A, Juhu Lane,  
Andheri, BOMBAY 58-AS.

NEWSLETTER  
FOR  
BIRDBATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 12

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A SHORT NOTE ON AN INTERESTING SUMMER  
IN NORTHERN EUROPE

By

Jasper Newsome

(Received 11 November 1964)

Like most English birdwatchers able to travel extensively, I usually spend my long summer vacations in the south of Europe, North Africa or the Middle East. This summer, for a change I went north, to Scandinavia. I had a very interesting time and several of my observations, and those of other people I met in the north this summer may be of some interest to Indian birdwatchers.

This summer in the north produced some odd results. Owing to the mild winter and fine spring there were some records of birds being recorded very far north. A Swedish friend spent a few weeks on the Varanger peninsula in the north of Norway, on the Arctic Ocean, and there, among other things, recorded a Black Kite (Milvus migrans) the same species as the omnipresent Pariah Kite of the Indian bird scene. This is probably the .....



most northerly record ever for this species. There was also a record of a Marsh Warbler (Acrocephalus palustris) collected on the island of Spitzbergen, which is several hundred miles north of the European mainland, and some thousand miles north of the Arctic Circle. Not only is this much further north than ever before recorded for this species, but it is an additional passerine species to the very short list for this island, famed for its gigantic sea-bird colonies. This warbler is not known from India, but other species of the genus are; it breeds as far east as the Caspian Sea region and occurs in Iran, mainly on passage. An interesting record of my own was of a Thrush Nightingale breeding on the Arctic Circle in Finland. This species is similar to the famous European Nightingale, which has been recorded as a vagrant from both West Pakistan and Bihar.

One of the commonest waders breeding in northern Scandinavia (the main wader breeding area of Europe) is the Wood Sandpiper (Tringa glareola) which is common in many parts of India in the winter. Also common are Green Sandpipers, Redshank and Greenshank, all to be found in India in the winter months.

At the end of my stay in the north I went to the Swedish ringing station at Ottenby. This station has a reputation for the large numbers of birds ringed each year and the very fine list of species observed. This year was a bad year, but in the course of my short stay there I was able to see no less than sixteen species of birds of prey, mainly on migration, and some twenty one species of waders. So large a number of birds of prey is quite exceptional for northern Europe these days; incidentally the list was topped by a Booted Eagle (Hieraaetus pennatus) which happened to be only the second record for Sweden. This species is confined to Spain, Southern France, and some parts of eastern Europe.

The ringing of passerines was disappointing. In the whole of August, under 2000 birds were ringed, compared with double that figure some years.

[As a human addition, I met a bus load of American birdwatchers; their leader had been in India several times looking for birds and our conversations were somewhat nostalgic as a result. I can't help feeling a sense of frustrated inferiority in offering these few lines on European birds to you, the guardians of what must be one of the most wonderful avifaunas in the world.]

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## SOME BIRD NOTES FROM SUKKUR, WEST PAKISTAN

By

D.A. Holmes and J. O. Wright  
Lower Indus Project, Sukkur, W. Pakistan  
(Received 14 November, 1964)

The following notes are all records from the area within a 30 mile radius of Sukkur in Upper Sind, between 16 January 1964 and August 1964. They comprise principally dates of breeding and migration and records of winter visitors recorded during the summer. Numbers refer to A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN by Sydney Dillon Ripley II, 1961. It should be remembered that this is not a complete check-

list of all the species in the Sukkur area.

38. Little Green Heron : Butorides striatus

This interesting heron seems to be quite common along the Indus at Sukkur, preferring the backwaters of the riverain for -ests, where a nest was found in a low bush overhanging a chan -nel on June 24. The parent was sitting on two oval pale-blue -green eggs. The birds are however not averse to feeding on the water's edge on ground devoid of vegetation.

42. Paddy bird : Ardeola grayi

Several were found nesting in a cattle egret colony on June 24. Many birds appeared to have bred before this and a number of juveniles were seen climbing about in the bushes. Other colonies consisting of Paddy birds only were also found in late June.

44. Cattle Egret : Bubulcus ibis

A nesting colony with several hundred nests, some already with young birds, was located in the riverain forests on May 25. On June 26 there were many more nests with up to 4 downy young per nest. On two nests the sitting bird was seen to have immaculate white plumage. The colony consisted almost entirely of Cattle Egrets with a very few Little Egrets and Paddy birds. During the nesting period Cattle Egrets were rarely seen outside a 10 mile radius of the colony. The breeding season would appear to be much earlier than that given for most of India, where it is dependent on the monsoons. Sind may be sufficiently irrigated and far enough removed from the monsoon rains for them to be independent of the monsoon for breeding purposes.

46. Large Egret : Egretta alba

A fairly common bird usually more or less solitary, fishing in jheels. A number of birds in breeding plumage were seen in late June in company with Little Egrets though nests were not found.

49. Little Egret : Egretta garzetta

During June these birds appeared to congregate near Chak (about 18 miles north of Sukkur). One small colony of about a dozen nests was found in late June but a much larger colony appeared to exist in the vicinity.

52. Night Heron : Nycticorax nycticorax

This seems to be quite a common resident, but roosting by day in trees lining the canals etc. It is frequently overlooked owing to its nocturnal habits.

90. Ruddy Shelduck : Tadorna ferruginea

Although a winter visitor two birds were seen in different localities on May 26, June 13, and June 27.

105. Shoveller : Anas clypeata

Another winter visitor recorded as late as June 1 when two drakes, present on a jheel from May 29, flew off north during a thunderstorm.

107. Redcrested Pochard : Netta rufina

A winter visitor, but our only record is of a drake on June 7 with a duck White-eyed Pochard.

109. White-eyed Pochard : Aythya nyroca

Another winter visitor that straggles into the hot weather, recorded on May 26 (three 'pairs' and June 7.

133. Black Kite : Milvus migrans

Bred throughout the area April to May. Adults moulted after breeding, the moult continuing into August, resulting in some unusual flight silhouettes.

135. Brahminy Kite : Haliastur indus

We have one breeding record of this fairly common bird, of a bird sitting on a nest in a shisham tree in early March.

157. White-eyed Buzzard Eagle : Butastur teesa

One of the commonest birds of prey in the area. A nest with two downy young was found on May 22, in a date palm. By June 26 fully grown immatures were frequently seen.

164. Booted Hawk-Eagle : Hieraaetus pennatus

A 'pair' seen March 3, harried a kite till it dropped the dead myna it was carrying, diving at the kite from a height with a very loud whoosh of air through the wings.

168. Tawny Eagle : Aquila rapax

Two full grown immatures were seen with parents in an area of date palms on May 22, and a similar family party near the riverain forest on July 8. The juveniles were cafe-au-lait colour as described in the FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF BRITAIN AND EUROPE and not darker than the adults as suggested in THE FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA.

174. Pallas's Fishing Eagle : Haliaeetus leucoryphus

One pair was found nesting on January 19. By February 29 the young were fully fledged but still on the nest (two young). Another nest found at the end of February had one fully fledged young.

180. Griffon Vulture : Gyps fulvus

Rare in the area but solitary birds may occasionally be seen at a carcass. One bird was recorded on April 7 and 10.

185. Indian Whitebacked Vulture : Gyps bengalensis

The commonest vulture except around towns where the Egyptian Vulture holds sway. They bred sociably in April in tall shisham trees along canal banks etc. Rarely more than 2 or 3 nests per tree but all adjacent trees usually had at least one nest. They roost in these same trees (sometimes on the nests) the year round.

186. Egyptian Vulture : Neophron percnopterus

A nest with downy young was seen on an old temple on May 22.

193. Marsh Harrier : Circus aeruginosus

This harrier is very common on some jheels in winter where females appear to outnumber males by about 9 to 1. They feed largely on duck injured by wildfowlers and are unalarmed by shooting even at close range.

335. Little Crane : Porzana parva  
338. Spotted Crane : Porzana porzana

The cranes are secretive birds, and one rarely has an opportunity for identification. On March 1 a Little Crane showed itself for long enough to be identified, and on February 2 a Spotted Crane did likewise. Both are winter visitors to reed beds.

343. Whitebreasted Waterhen : Amaurornis phoenicurus

Two family parties were seen beside a channel in the riverain forests on June 24. One family consisted of 4 all black downy chicks which were fully capable of swimming across a 20 yard channel when danger threatened.

347. Moorhen : Gallinula chloropus

A pair was seen with downy black young on May 6.

350. Coot : Fulica atra

An extremely abundant winter visitor. The huge flocks disappeared about mid March, since when isolated birds have been seen on March 27 and on April 14.

366. Redwattled Lapwing : Vanellus indicus

Chicks were seen away from the nest on April 14. (In 1963 in Lower Sind chicks were seen on August 28. These were capable of swimming to avoid danger.)

- 379-380. Little Ringed Plover : Charadrius dubius

Most frequently recorded from early March to late April. We have no breeding records of this bird although birds were seen on sandbanks along the Indus as late as July 1.

389. Blacktailed Godwit : Limosa limosa

A common winter visitor. Two were seen as late as May 31 in winter plumage.

- 393-394. Redshank : Tringa totanus

A relatively uncommon winter visitor in this area but the first autumn arrival was seen on August 9.

396. Greenshank : Tringa nebularia

One of the commoner waders to linger over the summer in Sind, with single birds along the Indus as late as June 10, while

the first autumn arrivals were seen on August 6.

397. Green Sandpiper : Tringa ochropus

This is another winter visitor late to leave and early to return. A large concentration of waders, principally this species was seen on March 26, probably on northward migration. Occasional birds were seen in the latter half of June and a flock of some 40 was seen on June 26, probably the vanguard of the autumn passage, though they did not become common in the district before the end of July.

398. Wood Sandpiper : Tringa glareola

In 1963 Wood Sandpipers were abundant in Lower Sind till late April, returning in early August. In the Sukkur area this year however, they were very scarce during winter and spring except for birds on northward passage in May. A noisy restless flock of about 50 was seen on the Indus on May 21. Returning birds were seen during the second week of August.

401. Common Sandpiper : Tringa hypoleucos

This sandpiper is less gregarious than the previous two, and much less common. It left the region at the end of March and the first autumn birds were recorded on August 6th.

429. Painted Snipe : Rostratula benghalensis

Our only records for the area are of several birds seen beside a wheel on May 26 and 30.

435. Stone Curlew : Burhinus oedienemus

One, or two pairs have been present along the Indus near Sukkur throughout June and July up to the present date. Although breeding was suspected it has not been confirmed.

444. Small Indian Pratincole : Glareola lactea

This bird was very abundant on the sandbanks of the Indus during May and June, but none were seen after July 1 when the river had covered all their sandbanks. In the early evening they were very restless on the ground but as dusk fell they flew up and down the water front looking rather like bats. No evidence of breeding was obtained but we may have located them too late in the season.

463. Indian River Tern : Sterna aurantia

470. Blackbelled Tern : Sterna acuticauda

Both these terns were very common along the Indus up to mid July but most seemed to leave the river after it rose at this time. As with the pratincoles we located the colony too late to record breeding but chicks were seen on a sandbank on June 14 with other full grown immatures. A few Little Terns (Sterna albifrons) were also present at this time.

(To be continued)

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## PASSAGE MIGRANTS IN ORISSA

By

S.D. Jayakar, R.S. Mangipudi,  
and

P. Srihari Rao

Genetics and Biometry Laboratory, Bhubaneswar 3

We have been making regular visits to the Chandka Game Sanctuary and the adjoining small Barang Lake which lie between Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. The path round the southern side of the lake and an area of light forest interrupted by rice fields and teak plantations in the Game Sanctuary have been systematically visited for looking at birds in the early morning. The latter place is the one we refer to whenever we mention the Game Sanctuary.

As would be expected, the birds seen have been changing rapidly in the last few weeks. Two species, who are no unexpected as passage migrants in this part of India, have been seen during this period in the Game Sanctuary. The first was a solitary Forest Wagtail (Motacilla indica) on September 24. It was first seen just off a path very near the main road. On following into the forest, we saw it sitting on a horizontal branch and 'slowly swaying the whole body and tail stiffly from side to side', as Smythies (BIRDS OF BURMA) puts it. This it did for about 15 seconds before it flew away. The second was a Red-winged Crested Cuckoo (Clamator coromandus) which was seen flying across the edge of a clearing before settling on a bamboo on October 8. Though it stayed there for some time, a rainfall -ed pool made it difficult to approach the bird, and the glare made it impossible to see the details clearly. However, the chestnut wings in flight, and the ragged crest and wide tail left little doubt as to its identity. These were the first times we have seen individuals of these species.

Himalayan Tree Pies (Dendrocitta formosae) have been seen in this area regularly since July 2. They were also seen on October 20, 1963. Though its distribution is not supposed to include this part of India, Dr. Salim Ali informs us that he has seen individuals of this species here when he visited Orissa a few years ago.

Common Green Pigeons (Treron phoenicoptera) were seen in large flocks flying round this area and on a banyan tree on September 24, whereas the only other times we have seen them here was one solitary bird on September 17 near Barang Lake and another on October 8 in the Game Sanctuary. Since August 27, Copper-smiths have also appeared in large flocks in the Game Sanctuary.

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## SOME COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF OTHER BIRDWATCHERS

By

S.V. Nilakanta  
(Received October 1964)

It is quite encouraging to find that others have made observations which concur with ones own. For this reason, I would like to add comments in support of observations expressed in the Newsletter.

My first comment is referring to Mrs. Usha Ganguli's article in the Newsletter Vol. 4, No.3, in respect of the young Bay-backed Shrike, whose nest was damaged by a rain storm, and who was later on found in a bush some distance away. It may be remembered that the baby bird had both eyes closed. This in turn was commented on by Dr. Salim Ali who suggests that they could have been two different chicks.

All that I have to say is that, on more than half a dozen occasions it has been noticed that birds keep their eyes closed prior to death. When I was a youngster, a number of people, mostly gardeners, used to bring young birds to my mother. The birds had been injured, generally by crows and sometimes by boys. Very few birds recovered from the injury to fly away but a great many used to accept food and drink. Later on, they used to perch in their cage with eyes closed in a sort of coma and accept water. Sometimes, after keeping their eyes closed for nearly two days they died.

It is possible that when the chick was observed by Mrs. Usha Ganguli in the bush, it had its eyes closed because it was quite ill. It might have had its eyes open earlier when it got up to the bush.

Mr. Zafar Futehally observes that Rufous-backed Shrikes need independent territories. Such a territory may have to be quite adequate in area for a pair of birds feeding their young. If this applies to Bay-backed Shrikes, it may be improbable that a different young bird of another family was in the bush after the rain.

My second reference is to Major A. David's letter in the Newsletter Vol. 4, No. 9. Crows are believed to collect bright objects as a hobby! As a youngster I have witnessed great excitement among servants when bright teaspoons used to be taken away by crows. Some marvellous animal biographies have been written by that erstwhile wolf trapper and great naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton. In his account of 'Silverpot' the crow, he describes that this leader among crows and a bird of unusual intelligence was in the habit of collecting bright objects. The crow used to hide his little horde and was very secretive about it. I think there was a picture of the crow with the handle of a china teacup, in the book I read about 20 years ago.

My last reference is to the article by Rev. A. Navarro, S.J. in the Newsletter Vol. 4, No. 10. I too have noticed the 'same' winter visitors at the same spot year after year. To make recognition positive, last year or rather early this year, I succeeded in banding two Blyth's Reed Warblers which visit the drumstick trees around my house. After banding them, I noticed three more without bands in the neighbourhood. Had I not marked them, I would have never suspected that there were five of them!

Blyth's Reed Warblers have come back and I am anxiously awaiting for them to come near enough, in order to observe if they are banded.<sup>1</sup>

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See letter by the author in the Correspondence section.

-- Ed.

# MORE BIRDS FROM THEKKADY

By

K. Nanu Nair

(Received 17 October 1964)

I had an opportunity of visiting Periyar Wild Life Sanctuary during last September. I could not find time exclusively for birdwatching due to other preoccupations. Yet I was able to see quite a number of birds around Class II Tourist Bungalow at Thekkady. The following are a few which I have seen and which do not find a place in the list furnished by Sri K. K. Neelakantan and Mrs. Usha Ganguli in the Newsletter for Bird-watchers for June 1964 and October 1964 respectively.

- Eastern Grey Heron : Seen near Arania Nivas on 11 Sept.
- Whitenecked Stork : do.
- Common Myna : Seen near Class II Tourist Bungalow on 11 Sept.
- Greyheaded Myna : At Edapalayam on 11 Sept.
- Fairy Blue Bird : Near Class II Tourist Bungalow on 11 Sept.

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## SOME BIRDS OUT OF BEAT IN COTACAMUND, S. INDIA

By

Mrs. Usha Ganguli

(Received 25 November 1964)

During my recent visit to Cotacamund (height 7000 ft.) in June 1964 I saw about a dozen species of birds far out of their 'upper range'. My stay was short, only three days, and I made the most of it by paying five visits to the Government Botanical Gardens. Except for a brief visit to Ooty Lake all my birdwatching was done within the sylvan surroundings of this enchanting place. These gardens are situated at a height of over 7300 ft. The emerald green sloping lawns, the exotic trees and the masses of seasonal flowers were a constant source of attraction to the human and avian visitors.

Below I list the birds seen during my brief visit together with the range against each bird as mentioned by S. Dillon Ripley in his A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN. Except for the first two birds all the others were seen within the Government Gardens. Birds marked with an asterisk were beyond their 'upper range'.

\*Pond Heron : Ardeola grayii ('From the plains up to 5000 ft.')

Solitary bird on the shore of Lake Cotacamund on June 4.

\* Brahmini Kite : Haliastur indus ('From the plains up to 1000 ft.')



A solitary immature male flew in and landed on a bare branch near the above lake. I have seen Bramini Kites both adult and immature birds in the Kulu Valley above 4000 ft. in the month of June.

\*Small Green Barbet : Megalaima viridis ('Up to 2000 ft.')

Saw and heard it every visit. Once saw a bird catch a winged insect in a hop-cum-flight.

\*Jungle Myna : Acridotheres fuscus (For the race maharattensis 'from plains to 5000 ft.')

Common.

\*Pied Flycatcher Shrike : Hemipus picatus (For the race picatus 'In the foothills up to 5000 ft.')

Saw three birds, 2 ♂♂, and 1 ♀.

Redwhiskered Bulbul : Pycnonotus jocosus (For the race fusci-caudatus whose type locality is restricted to the Nilgiri Hills Dr. Ripley does not give the upper range.)

The commonest bird in the gardens.

\*Black and Orange Flycatcher : Muscicapa nigrorufa ('From 2500 to 6000 ft.')

A small flock of 5 to 6 birds in low bushes.

Nilgiri Flycatcher : Muscicapa albicaudata ('From 2500 ft. up.')

Male and female seen.

Greyheaded Flycatcher : Culicicapa ceylanensis ('From 1000 ft. up into the hills' for the typical race)

Small flock.

\*Whitespotted Fantail Flycatcher : Rhipidura albogularis ('From the edge of the plains to 6000 ft.')

Behaviour pugnacious. Female probably had a nest.

\*Ashy Wren-Warbler : Prinia socialis (Typical race 'From the plains to 5000 ft.')

Breeding, carrying food for nestlings.

\*Magpie Robin : Copsychus saularis ('From plains to 3500 ft.')

An adult male singing. I have seen a ♂ bird in the Kulu Valley above 4000 ft.

Pied Bushchat : Saxicola caprata (Race nilgiriensis 'From 3000 ft. up.')

A pair with 2 half grown birds. The latter were picking insects from the lawn.

\*Southern Blackbird : Turdus merula (Race nigropileus 'From plains to 7000 ft.')

Singing from a high tree-top.

\*Grey Tit : Parus major (For race stupac 'From foothills to 3500 ft.')

Saw them everyday with fledglings.

\*Velvetfronted Nuthatch : Sitta frontalis ('From edge of plains to 5000 ft.')

Four to five birds.

\*Small Sunbird : Nectarinia minima ('From foothills to 7000 ft.')

Common. ♂♂ were in complete eclipse plumage.

White-eye : Zosterops palpebrosa (For race nilgiriensis 'From 1500 ft. to 8650 ft.')

Common.

\*Spotted Munia : Lonchura punctulata ('From plains to 5500 ft. Rarely 7500 ft.')

At least 3 pairs breeding. Saw ♂♂ (?) carrying long flowering strips of Pampas grass (introduced from Argentina) to nests in *Draecna* (10 ft high!) and some trees.

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#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

##### Bombay Natural History Society.

Most of our members will be familiar with this Society and know of the good work it is doing in a wide field. What will be of particular interest to our readers is the research work carried out by two students under the guidance of Dr. Salim Ali. The subject is 'The role of birds in our National Economy', and a fuller report about this will appear in a later issue of our Newsletter. Meanwhile, the brochure and application form of the Bombay Natural History Society is enclosed. The Society is short of members and the membership fee of Rs30/- per year does not cover its operating expenses. Every one of our subscribers who can afford it must become a member of the Bombay Natural History Society. By doing so you will greatly help the cause of natural history in this country.

If you are a member already, please make it a point to enrol another member before the end of this month. Firms and institutions are also eligible at no extra charge.

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#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

##### N o t i c e

Members are reminded that the Annual General Meeting will take place at 5 p.m. on Sunday, 20 December 1964, at the residence of Zafar Futchally, Juhu Lane, Andheri, Bombay 58 - AS., Telephone 571279.

We hope every one from Bombay and some at least from outside Bombay will come.

Zafar Futchally,  
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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## CORRESPONDENCE

Ringed birds

Further to my recent note (p. 7, supra - Ed.) I have to add that there are at least two Blyth's Reed Warblers near my house.

One of them is wearing an aluminium band on its right leg. Undoubtedly this is a bird which was banded by me early this year, and has come back to winter at the same spot.

S. V. Nilakanta

The Theosophical Colony, Juhu,  
Bombay 54

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Birds and Snakes

A colleague at the Society told me of an instance he came across in December 1963 of four Jungle Crows (Corvus macrorhyn-  
chus) attacking a cobra. Two crows, he said, were in front of the cobra on either side of it, and two others behind, facing the two in front. When the cobra attacked the crows in front of it which were cawing at it with necks outstretched towards it and with wings raised up as they did so, the two behind the snake flew and pecked it. My colleague, however, was unable to witness the completion of this drama, as his companion on that outing, an elderly Brahmin, was all too anxious to save the cobra.

Subsequently reading through THE SNAKE, by John Crompton (Faber and Faber, London 1963) I came across the following incident recorded at p. 115 therein. It reads: 'A man once kept a black cobra as a pet. He was a Major Boyd of the R.A.M. C. stationed at Ferozepore. Not only did he give his dangerous inmate the run of the house but he treated it like a dog or cat, letting it out of the house at regular times to get exercise and fresh air. One evening, when he had let the cobra out and it was taking its exercise, he saw a small owl swoop down and give it a blow on the head with its wing. The snake adopted the usual attitude of defence, raising itself and expanding its hood. The owl hovered in front but kept out of reach. It was all part of a concerted plan, for while the snake's attention was thus engaged another owl (the mate, no doubt) flew up from behind, struck the snake on the head and knocked it to the ground. Thereafter the owls attacked in turns, knocking the snake down whenever it raised its head. Major Boyd, thinking things had gone far enough, hastened up and rescued his pet but alas, the rescue came too late for he found that the snake's lower jaw had been fractured, and he had to destroy it. He was greatly upset, for he had had it a long time, it was very tame and he was extremely fond of it.'

The passage from THE SNAKE may be of interest to the readers of the Newsletter for Birdwatchers.

Miss A. Lewis

Research Assistant

Bombay Natural History Society  
Bombay

Zafar Futehally...

Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers, Andheri, Bombay 58-AS.

BIRDWATCHERS' FIELD CLUB OF INDIA

Field outing on Sunday, 13 December, 1964

There will be a field outing on 13.xii.1964.

Please assemble at 7 a.m. at the Aarey Market.

For further details contact Mr. Udayshanker Rao at telephone 474344 after 8 p.m. on any day.

Zafar Futchally  
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers

# BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



91, Walkeshwar Road,  
Bombay 6-W B

The Society consists of Life Members, Ordinary Members, and Honorary Members.

**Life Members** pay an entrance fee of Rs. 5 and a Life Membership fee of Rs. 500.

The subscription of members elected in October, November, and December, if paid in the year of their election, is considered as for the next year and they are entitled to all journals published subsequent to the date of their election.

The terms are the same for members living outside India. Such members should pay their subscriptions by means of orders on their Bankers to pay to the Society in Bombay on 1st January in each year the amount of the subscription, plus postal registration — in all Rs. 32.50. If this cannot be done then the sum of £2-10-0 should be paid annually to the Society's London Bankers — The National Overseas and Grindlays Bank, Ltd., 26 Bishopsgate, London, E.C. 2.

The Society publishes an illustrated journal, which is issued three times a year, containing articles contributed mainly by members and dealing with natural history subjects of scientific and popular interest. As a scientific journal it ranks amongst the most important publications issued in the East and is an indispensable aid to the study of the Oriental fauna and flora. On the popular side its articles appeal to the sportsman and naturalist the world over.

The Society possesses large reference collections of mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, etc., open to members.

The Society is associated with the Trustees in conducting the Natural History Section of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

Members receive the Society's *Journal* post free. Other publications of the Society and back numbers of the journal can be purchased by them at reduced rates.

The Society's library is available to members, and books may be borrowed on application.

The Society is always willing to correspond with members in matters connected with natural history, and to offer assistance or advice to private collectors of zoological material. This is of very great benefit to up-country members.

Ladies or gentlemen wishing to become members of the Society are requested to communicate with the Honorary Secretary.

91, Walkeshwar Road,  
BOMBAY 6-WB

HUMAYUN ABDULALI,  
*Honorary Secretary.*

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Those desirous of joining the Society are requested to fill in and sign this form and forward it to the Honorary Secretary, BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY, 91, Walkeshwar Road, Bombay 6-WB

NAME AND ADDRESS	NAME OF PROPOSER

# THE SOCIETY'S PUBLICATIONS

## Birds

**The Book of Indian Birds**, by SALIM ALI, 6th revised and enlarged Edition, With 64 coloured plates depicting 256 species, and 22 in monochrome from photographs. Rs. 25

(Price to Members Rs. 20)

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## Mammals

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